



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14970> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14970

Received: 14 July 2022, Revised: 18 August 2022, Accepted: 02 September 2022

Published Online: 21 September 2022

In-Text Citation: (Azam et al., 2022)

To Cite this Article: Azam, N. H. M., Alha, A. H., & Saili, A. R. (2022). Factors Influencing Purchase Decision of Agriculture Products: A Case Study in Selangor. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(9), 1950 – 1962.

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Vol. 12, No. 9, 2022, Pg. 1950 – 1962

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www.hrmars.com

ISSN: 2222-6990

Factors Influencing Purchase Decision of Agriculture Products: A Case Study in Selangor

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Abstract

This research was conducted to understand the factors that influence the purchase decision of fruits and vegetables among consumers in Selangor. Understanding consumer behavior is key in increasing the consumption of agricultural produces. Consumer knowledge, satisfaction, and experience are studied to understand the effects of these variables on attitude. Attitude is known as one of the predictors in influencing the purchase decision, thus the relationship between these variables was also studied in this research. The study was conducted in Teluk Panglima Garang with 203 respondents who took part in the survey. Descriptive analysis was performed to understand the demographic background of the respondents and their consumption patterns. Correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relationship between consumer knowledge, consumer satisfaction, and consumer experience with attitude. The result shows that all independent variables are found to be significant with consumer experience being the most influential factor among the three. The relationship between attitude and purchase decision was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Attitude shows a significant relationship with the purchase decision. The results found in this study can be used by farmers and marketers to increase the purchase pattern of agricultural products among consumers.

Keywords: Consumer Knowledge, Consumer Satisfaction, Consumer Experience, Attitude, Purchase Decision

Introduction

Background of Study

The agriculture sector is one of the most important sectors in Malaysia. Despite its lack in contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) as compared to other sectors such as service and manufacturing sectors, the agriculture sector is essential to the country in ensuring food security in the country. The food security issue has long been a problem not only in third-world countries but also in developed countries. Malaysian expenditure has been reportedly increasing by 3.7 percent in the urban areas and 3.6 percent in rural areas annually for the period between 2016-2019 with 17.3 percent of it caters to food and beverage consumption (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020).

There are some changes in trends for consumer demand and satisfaction levels in food selection over the last decades. Malaysian consumers also have been observed to follow the trend due to changes in consumer attitudes toward food, healthy lifestyle, and consumption patterns. Furthermore, more consumers are demanding healthy, nutritious, and safe food (Boutouis et al., 2018; Oroian et al., 2017) nowadays. Thus, farmers or retailers have to understand the factors that influence consumers' purchase decision as the demand for fruits and vegetables are increasing every year especially during the pandemic (Hassen et al., 2020; Bhatti et al., 2020).

Problem Statement

Consumer behavior is the study of how consumers decide to spend their resources to purchase certain products or services. Such study focuses on every element of the behavior including the time, purpose, amount, frequency of their purchase, use, and disposal of goods. Consumer behavior also involves the psychological processes that consumers go through to identify their needs, find ways to satisfy their needs and make purchase decisions (Kumar, 2016). With the information gained from this study, farmers and retailers can further influence the consumers' behavior to increase the purchase of their agricultural products.

The product's quality is often one of the criteria that can influence consumers' purchase decisions. However, consumers can have difficulties, -when purchasing agricultural products due to limited information regarding the product itself. This shows that knowledge is very important in the process of choosing a product as it enables the consumers to choose the right products that can satisfy their needs. Consumers also tend to rely a lot on their past purchase history to help them decide on their next purchase. Moreover, consumers' experience is also one of the most important elements that can influence their purchase decision. This experience often led to their satisfaction when purchasing the products. All of these factors reflect the attitude of consumers toward engaging in certain behavior. Understanding these factors can enable farmers and marketers to influence the consumers' behavior.

Objectives of Study

This study was conducted to understand the factors that contribute to purchase decision of consumer towards fruits and vegetables in Selangor. Among the objectives of the study are:

- To identify the relationship between consumer knowledge, consumer experience, and consumer satisfaction towards attitude.
- To study the relationship between attitude and purchase decision.

Significance of the Study

This study extends the body of knowledge of consumers' behavior towards the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables. The findings can benefit farmers, marketers, and responsible bodies to help market agricultural products effectively whilst understand the consumers' views and concerns about agricultural products.

Literature Review

Consumer Knowledge

Knowledge is very important in making a decision. To buy a product or acquire a service, consumers must know about the product itself. The information is used to help the consumers to decide on purchasing the products. Zainol et al (2020) in their study regarding healthy food found that there is a significant positive effect on health knowledge towards consumers' attitudes. They found that consumers are more likely to show a positive attitude towards nutrition labels when they have knowledge about health. The more knowledge one has related to a certain product, the more likely one will engage in certain behavior. In the case of genetically modified (GM) food, it was found that consumers with more knowledge about GM food products showed a more negative attitude towards the products (Aliasgharzadeh et al., 2022). This is corroborated by Zhu et al (2018) that found knowledge to be the predictor of risk perception that in turn influence the attitude of the consumers toward GM food in China. These studies exhibit the importance of knowledge in attitude formation among consumers which indicates that positive or negative attitudes can be formed based on the knowledge the consumers obtained.

Consumer Experience

Consumer experience is a multifaceted structure that focuses on the behavioral, cognitive, emotive, sensory, and social responses that consumers have to marketing incentives (Schallehn et al., 2019). A study conducted by Jhamb et al (2020) about the relationship between experience and attitude of consumers in the purchase of luxury brands products found that experience plays a significant role in building the attitude of consumers towards the products. Miao et al (2021) found that consumers' prior experience in performing a transaction in an e-commerce setting serve as a mediator that influence consumers' satisfaction and repurchase intention. Dai et al (2020) in their study related to consumers' intention to use autonomous vehicles, confirmed that a satisfying experience contributed to a higher degree of attitude. Based on past studies conducted, consumers' experience is one of the most important predictors of consumers' attitudes.

Consumer Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction is the response that consumers show after engaging in certain behavior. Al Amin et al (2021) found that when consumers are satisfied with the services offered, they were likely to repeat the same behavior. The attitude of consumers is related to their satisfaction toward certain products or services. In the business-to-consumer e-commerce (B2C) segment, it is found that consumers' satisfaction influences the consumers repurchase intention (Miao et al., 2021).

Attitude

Attitude is one of the most important elements in predicting the engagement of certain behavior (Ajzen, 1985). The theory of planned behavior suggests that a positive attitude will

influence the behavior in a favourable way. James et al (2019) in their study regarding organic tea consumption found that consumers perceived organic tea as a healthier option, and it influenced their purchase decision. This is supported by Park et al (2018); Wickham et al (2020) that found a high intake of fruits is positively associated with a healthy status. Not only that, regular intake of fruits and vegetables also shows a positive association with good mental health (Emerson and Carbert, 2019; Gehlich et al., 2019; Glabska et al., 2020). People who are generally healthy and lead an active lifestyle consume more fruits in their diets as it provides them the benefits needed for them to stay healthy. If consumers view certain products as healthy or essential in maintaining their health, they are more likely to engage in purchasing behavior. Furthermore, young adolescents also understand the importance of eating healthy which includes eating the recommended fruits and vegetable servings in maintaining good health (Gilmour et al., 2020). The majority of people associate fruits and vegetable consumption as necessary for their balanced diet, thus positive attitude affect the purchase decision.

Research Framework

Consumer knowledge, consumer experience, and consumer satisfaction are identified as variables that can influence the attitude of consumers. Attitude is one of the most important elements that can influence consumers' behavior. Thus, the conceptual framework of this study was constructed as shown in Figure 1.

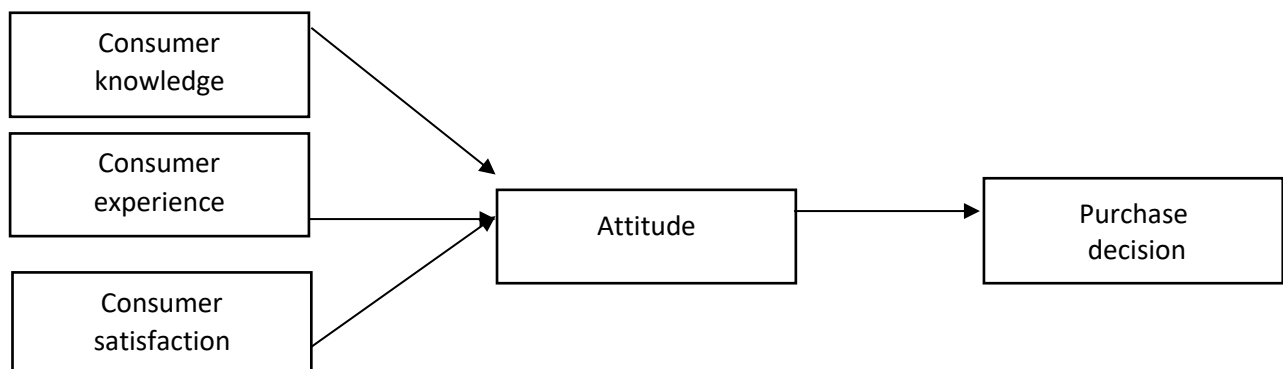


Figure 1 *Conceptual framework*

Methods

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire comprised of two parts. Part 1 consists of items to identify the demographic profile of the respondents such as gender, age, educational background, and others. Part 2 comprised of questions related to all variables used in this study namely consumer knowledge, consumer experience, consumer satisfaction, attitude, and purchase decision. All variables were assessed using a five-point Likert scale with 1 indicating strongly disagree whereas 5 indicating strongly disagree.

The questionnaire was constructed in dual language to ensure that the respondents fully understand the questions asked. The questionnaire was constructed using Google Forms and distributed online to the respondents. The link was given through WhatsApp, email, and messaging apps for ease of disseminating the survey, especially during the pandemic as physical contact was limited.

Population and Sample Size

The study was conducted in Teluk Panglima Garang, Selangor. A total of 203 consumers have been selected to answer the questionnaire from 23,582 residents in the locality.

Sampling Method

The convenience sampling was employed as the sampling method due to the time constraint in conducting the research. This method allows the researchers to collect the data in a short amount of time. Besides, the ease of use and low cost are also among the reason why this method of sampling was chosen.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). A reliability test was conducted on the pilot test prior to the actual study. Descriptive analysis and multiple linear regression are then conducted on the final data to meet the objectives of the study.

Results and Discussion

Reliability Test

A reliability test was performed on the pilot study data. The purpose of the test was to measure the internal consistency of all measures used in the questionnaire. This test was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire used for the actual study. Table 1 shows the results of the reliability test.

Table 1
Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.937	0.940	25

Cronbach's alpha values were used to measure the reliability and consistency of the items. The results in Table 1 show that the instrument's reliability was highly reliable, with an overall alpha value above 0.9. Therefore, the items in the questionnaire are suitable to be used in the actual study.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted to explore and summarize the demographic information of the respondents. The descriptive analysis helped in understanding the demographic profile of the respondents so that the results can be better interpreted according to the respondents' profiles.

Table 2

Demographic profile of respondents

Socio-demographic profile	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	94	46.3
Female	109	53.7
Race		
Malay	189	93.1
Chinese	4	2.0
Indian	10	4.9
Level of education		
Secondary school	14	6.9
Certificate	10	4.9
Diploma	47	23.2
Degree	126	62.1
Master	6	3.0
Occupation		
Student	38	18.7
Housewife	4	2.0
Government employee	76	37.4
Private employee	72	35.5
Self-employed	9	4.4
Retired	4	2.0
Monthly income		
Less than RM1,000	42	20.7
RM1,001 – RM2,000	57	28.1
RM2,001 – RM3,000	18	8.9
RM3,001 – RM4,000	9	4.4
RM4,001 – RM5,000	17	8.4
More than RM5,001	60	29.6
Marital status		
Single	114	56.2
Married	89	43.8

Based on the results, the majority of the respondents are female (53.7%). Malays are the majority race that took part in the survey (93.1%) followed by Indians (4.9%) and Chinese (2.0%). Respondents involved in this study are highly educated with 88.3% of them obtained tertiary education up to a Master's degree. The respondents consist of working adults (77.3%), students (18.7%), housewives (2.0%) and retiree (2.0%). The majority of the respondents came from the highest income group of more than RM5,000 per month (29.6%), followed by the RM1,001 to RM2,000 income group with 28.1%.

The pattern of consumption was also studied in this research. It was found that the majority of the respondents spent between RM50 to RM100 per month on fruits and vegetables. Most of the respondents bought fruits and vegetables once a week (35.5%) and only 5.9% of them purchased it every day. Based on the results, it was also found that 75.4% of the respondents only ate 1 serving of fruits and vegetables per day and only 7% ate more than 2 servings per day. The respondents also preferred to purchase fruits and vegetables

from the supermarket (70.0%), followed by the grocery store (52.2%) and they bought the least directly from the farmers (7.9%).

Correlation

Correlation measures the relationship between two or more. It is used to measure the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. Correlation analysis was used to observe how a variable behaves when there is a change in another related variable. Correlation analysis was conducted to analyse the relationship between consumer knowledge, consumer experience, and consumer satisfaction with attitude.

Table 3
Results of Correlation

		Knowledge	Experience	Satisfaction	Attitude
Knowledge	Pearson	1	.687**	.587**	.583**
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N		203	203	203
Experience	Pearson	.687**	1	.751**	.669**
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	203	203	203	203
Satisfaction	Pearson	.587**	.751**	1	.535**
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	203	203	203	203
Attitude	Pearson	.583**	.669**	.535**	1
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	203	203	203	203

Based on the results in Table 3, it was found that all independent variables (consumer knowledge, consumer experience, and consumer satisfaction) showed a significant relationship with the dependent variable (attitude) with a significance level of $p = 0.000$. The strongest correlation is between consumer experience and attitude with $r = 0.669$, followed by consumer knowledge, $r = 0.583$ and consumer satisfaction, $r = 0.535$. Thus, it was found that the best predictor for attitude was consumer experience although all dependent variables studied in this research were found to be significantly correlated to attitude.

Regression Analysis

Regression is conducted to estimate the strength of a relationship between a dependent variable with one or more independent variables. Regression analysis can help to explain how these factors (variables) influence each other. It was conducted to determine the relationship between attitude and purchase decision.

Table 4

Result of Regression

Variable	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)		8.150	.000
Attitude	.684	13.285	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Based on the result in Table 4, it was found that attitude showed a significant relationship with purchase decision at a significant level of 0.000.

Discussion

Increasing purchase frequency of fruits and vegetables is essential in helping farmers to generate more income. Thus, by understanding the underlying factors that influence consumer behavior, it is possible to increase the purchase frequency. The study conducted found that consumer experience, consumer knowledge, and consumer satisfaction all significantly influence consumer attitudes towards purchasing fruits and vegetables. Positive consumer experience is found to positively impact the attitude towards certain products. Lee (2020) in his study also found the same results in which brand experience has a significant correlation with brand attitude. Polimeni et al (2018) conducted their study in Romania regarding consumer motivation in purchasing agriculture products in the farmers' market state that when consumers have a positive or pleasant experience, they are more willing to engage in the behavior despite the existence of certain barriers that make it hard for them to do so. Furthermore, experience influence how people perceived certain behavior based on the emotions associated with it at the time of occurrence, so positive experience translates into a positive attitude. Apart from experience, knowledge is also an important element in influencing attitude. The more knowledge someone has, the more it helps to shape the attitude towards certain behavior. The result of this study found that knowledge shows a significant relationship towards attitude. Consumers that show high knowledge of food nutrition, and the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables are more likely to have a positive attitude towards purchasing it. Health and nutrition education is important in improving attitudes towards healthy eating (Shapu et al., 2020). High knowledge regarding the benefits and advantages of consuming enough fruits and vegetables in maintaining good health will form a positive attitude towards fresh fruits and vegetables. Apart from experience and knowledge, the satisfaction of consumers regarding the aesthetic feature of the products, the freshness, and the overall quality of fruits and vegetables also plays significant roles in shaping the attitude towards purchasing fruits and vegetables. El-Mesery et al (2019) highlighted the influence of quality and food safety as the main criteria in determining consumer satisfaction with physical appearances such as shape, colour, and others being among the most important indicator. In a study conducted in Germany, it was found that consumers have a positive attitude towards fruits that have cosmetic flaws if they are offered at a discounted price but otherwise, they are not willing to purchase them (Barbe et al., 2017). Thus, the findings of those studies are in line with this study that consumer satisfaction significantly influences their purchasing attitude. In retrospect, if the fruits and vegetables are aesthetically pleasing, they show a positive attitude towards them. Furthermore, attitude is a strong indicator that determines consumer behavior. Many studies have found a significant relationship between

attitude and behavior. Ajzen (1985), in his Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) highlighted attitude, along with subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are among the variables that influence behavior. This study has found that attitude has a significant relationship with consumer purchase decisions. A positive attitude towards fruits and vegetables translates into purchasing decision by the consumers. Lwin et al (2020) found that a positive attitude toward fruits and vegetables significantly influences the intention to consume more fruits and vegetables among Singaporeans consumers – a finding that is similar to this study. Affective attitude or attitude that is derived from emotional attachments towards a certain thing is found to directly influence healthy eating habits over time (Conner & Norman, 2021). Thus, understanding all factors that can influence attitude can directly help to predict consumer behavior, in this case, the purchase decision of consumers towards fruits and vegetables.

Conclusion

There are a lot of factors that can influence consumers' purchasing behavior. Understanding these factors enable farmers to increase their profits by influencing their consumers' purchase decisions. Although purchase decision is complex and multidimensional, there are a lot of past studies that have identified the main factors that can significantly influence the intended behavior. This study found that the purchase frequency of fruits and vegetables among respondents is once a week with a spending amount of RM50 to RM100. Farmers and marketers can influence the purchase behavior of consumers by focusing on delivering better services to the consumers as it will positively influence their experience and satisfaction in purchasing the products. Besides, they also should focus on increasing the knowledge about the advantages of local fruits and vegetables among the consumers so that the consumers will increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. The ability of farmers and marketers to influence these factors can positively shape the consumers' attitude regarding consuming fruits and vegetables which in turn affects their purchase behavior. The major contribution of this study is that it has shed light on the knowledge regarding the purchase decisions of the local population and factors that influence their purchase decision of fruits and vegetables which can help local farmers and a community of researchers whilst assisting the relevant agricultural agencies on their agendas.

This research provides a revision of consumer behavior theory by exploring the impacts of knowledge, experience, and satisfaction in the framework. This study adds to the existing theory by exploring the factors that can influence attitude in the existing theory. Even though there are a lot of studies conducted in comprehending consumers' behavior, the impact of knowledge, experience, and satisfaction are not studied enough especially in the case of Malaysian consumer. Furthermore, the concept of consumers' attitude is vast and understanding consumer's attitude regarding certain products might differs according to the types of the product itself. The three factors help to explain the multifaceted aspects of attitude and how the factors played role in shaping the consumers' attitude. As a framework informed by recent research exploring the new aspects of attitude, it contributes to a better understanding of consumer behavior in the context of fruits and vegetables purchase decision.

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