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Factors Influencing Intention to Consume Organic Food among Young Adults in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia was exposed to organic food as the country's growth changed. Even though it is still relatively new, it has garnered a positive reception. The current study, in this regard, intends to investigate young adults' intentions toward consuming organic food in Malaysia. The study uses the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a theoretical framework and expands on it by including two new components, health consciousness and environmental concern. Using an online survey, google forms, and the judgmental sampling approach, 324 valid responses were obtained. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to examine the data. In findings, TPB was found to be beneficial in predicting young individuals' intentions to consume organic foods. The outcome also validated and increased the prediction value of the suggested model. Finally, the consequences for policymakers and future research directions have been highlighted.

Keywords: organic food, theory planned behaviour, young adults, intention, consumption

INTRODUCTION

Organic foods are becoming more popular and appear to be relatively new in Malaysia, especially among the younger generation. Organic food demand has increased fast in Europe and North America, while it remains low in Malaysia (Hassan, Loi, & Kok, 2015). Although there is currently low demand for organic food in Malaysia, the trend towards organic food consumption and the consumer attractiveness of organic products is developing.

According to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), global organic food and beverage profits increased by \$5 billion between 2010 and 2012, reaching around \$6 billion in 2012 (Willer & Lernoud, 2014). However, due to the present trend of consumers, particularly young adults, becoming increasingly worried about the nutritional quality of foods and their health. Thus, demand for organic food items is becoming more noticeable, despite the premium or high pricing supplied.

Aside from the high price, the selection of organic food is limited. According to Ghosh, Barai, & Datta (2019), many researchers have identified a lack of customer awareness as a key barrier to organic food consumption, but none of them has elaborated on the level of customer involvement associated with organic food purchase.

The study aimed to investigate the factors influencing the intention to consume organic food among young adults. Young adults' eating habits and a lack of awareness of the health advantages of organic food consumption are causing challenges in developing a better and healthier lifestyle (Mamun et al., 2020). As a result, to stay healthy, young adults should consume organic foods.

There were five objectives of this research:

1. To identify the relationship between attitude and intention to consume organic food among young adults in Malaysia.
2. To investigate the relationship between perceived behavioral control and intention to consume organic food among young adults in Malaysia.
3. To examine the relationship between subjective norms and intentions to consume organic food among young adults in Malaysia.
4. To determine the relationship between health consciousness and intention to consume organic food among young adults in Malaysia.
5. To identify the relationship between environmental concern and intention to consume organic food among young adults in Malaysia.

Significance of the Study

Future Researchers

The results of this study will serve as a guide and resource for future research on the intention to consume organic food among young adults. Other researchers also can improve this study, as well as reorganize old studies to be utilized as new studies. More research is being carried out to gain a better idea of the scope of the investigation.

Ministry of Health

The significance of this study will provide information to the ministry to take appropriate action. In addition, this study also gives an idea to the government to further diversify programs related to healthy lifestyle practices, especially through the use of organic food. In daily life, programs such as seminars, talks, or pamphlets can help consumers get information related to organic food intake.

Consumer

This research can directly benefit young adults to prepare awareness of the intention to consume organic food due to attitude, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, health consciousness, and environmental concern that can affect the intention to consume organic food. Consuming organic food is very important and gains benefits to young adults because they do not contain preservatives that can make them last longer.

Organic Food Store Operators (Supplier)

Suppliers are to be able to improve and identify the needs of buyers and consumers, especially from the aspect of demand and supply of organic food. This can increase the purchase of organic food from farmer's markets, local farms, and community-supported agriculture (CSA). While buying directly from farmers, consumers can provide knowledge such as organic methods used during planting, practices followed, and others. This will increase the knowledge and give ideas to support local and small organic farms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Organic Food

The term "organic" refers to a food's production technique. Because of a surge in consumer environmental concerns, the organic food industry has recently shown a strong expansion trend. Recent research has looked at certain aspects of buyer behavior for new items (Qasim, Yan, Guo, Saeed, & Ashraf, 2019).

According to Somasundram, Razali, & Santhirasegaram (2016), recently the consumption of organic food has increased. Consumption in Malaysia remains a viable sector. East Malaysia's