

What Drives UAE Buyers towards Organic Food Product? An Experimental Study

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Abstract

The awareness about organic food has been increasing among the consumers in UAE. People are showing more interest in purchasing organic food. This research is to identify, what are the factors that influence the consumers to purchase organic in the Abu Dhabi. The review of the literature has shown that wide range of factors is proved to be crucial to influencing consumers to exhibit positive attitude towards organic foods. As an outcome of the synthesis of prominent and recent literature, a set of factors have been identified that are important for motivating consumers which included health consciousness, environmental factors, safety concern and convenience and price. The main aim of this empirical study is analyzing the importance that consumers have towards the factors that influence their attitude toward organic foods in UAE. The study suggests that attitude toward organic is predicted by factors like health consciousness, and environmental factors. The other two factors safety concern and convenience and price have non significance impacts towards consumer attitude. The data were collected from a random sample of around 47 consumers who regularly purchase organic food in UAE. The paper discusses the results of multi regression models used to detect how the motivating factors influence consumer's attitude to purchase organic foods. The results of the study show that factors like health consciousness and environmental concern have positive attitude. Whereas convenience and price, and safety concern were having non significance impact in persuading consumers attitude towards organic foods.

Keywords: Organic; Purchase intention; Motivation; Green consumers

Introduction

The rapidity of the growth due to industrial development and information technology revolution along with a rise in the population has detrimental effects on the agricultural production. The soil productivity has been increased manifold by using chemical fertilizers and advanced cultivation techniques. People and government have started to realize the ill effects of chemical content in the food very lately. Food safety has begun to receive increased attention recently. As a result, the demand for organically grown food products has been increasing around the world [1].

Organic food products comprise of agricultural food products that are grown naturally without using chemical fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides and additional synthetic chemical elements during its lifecycle including assembly, treating, and storage. Moreover, organic food products are not grown by genetically modifying methods. Similarly, organic method based livestock breeding don't involve evolution hormones, antibiotics, and extra chemicals to enhance the development of livestock.

Environmental factors

Today we are experiencing more man-made disasters than the natural. There is dramatic changing in global warming due to human errors. People are looking forward to changing the world as better and safer society and in turn, consumers are started demanding a new technology that is more reliable, cleaner and environmentally friendly. Almost all the new technologies in every industry are considered environmental friend or eco-friendly. We are experiencing almost in all the industry this changes.

Similarly, consumers who are buying the foods are considered organic foods are safer and environmentally friendly. There has been ongoing research globally on organic food consumer purchasing

behavior and their motive towards the organic food. Organic food considered to be eco-friendly and cause no harm to the environment [2-4].

Health conscious

Health is one of the main factors consumers are shifting their purchasing behavior towards the organic food. There have been many health related issues on conventional food product such as food and mouth disease, bird flu, etc. consumer is putting them at most interest and care while choosing the food they consume. Health related issues have prompted in increase sales of supplementary health product. Organic foods are considered as one of the alternative health supplementary consumers can use to maintain their health and lifestyle. There have been many studies which prove that the consumer main motive towards purchasing organic food because of its health and safer [5-8].

Safety concern

Safety is another factor which motivates the consumers towards the organic food. Due to increased use of pesticide in genetically modified food which in turn has effects on the foods we consume. There had been many cases where people had died due to heavy pesticide present

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in their food. Consumers are looking for an alternative to avoid taking pesticides, and organic food is considered pesticide free. The consumer is happier and wanted to pay the extra price for harmless and trusted food which has fewer pesticide and dangerous material consumers [9,10].

Convenience and price

Convenience and price play a vital role in determining consumer willingness towards the organic food. Organic food buyers like to purchase a product which is fresh and easily accessible. Organic buyers like to buy the food daily, which is fresh, healthy from nearby stores. Consumers are willing to pay the higher price for the quality product as well-known factors from the earlier studies. Convenience are considers as barriers, when organic food available becomes scares. However, some of the earlier studies have described higher price is one of the discouraging factors and provoke negative attitude towards the organic food.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

According to the study by Ajzen [11] intention to purchase towards product is one of the best predictions towards the consumer behavior. Consumer with positive attitude is highly influence towards intention to purchase the organic food. The theory support consumer is more concern about the consequences of the action. If the consequences are more favorable then the attitude towards purchasing food will be high and intention to purchase towards purchasing food will be high. Hence based on the theory, different variable factors are analyses to test their attitude towards the organic food, a conceptual framework is evolved. The proposed framework believes that the consumer attitude towards purchasing organic food products are strongly influenced by four variables namely health consciousness, environmental factors, safety concern and convenience and price. The proposed model for purchase intentions of organic food products is shown in Figure 1.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to determine the factors motivate the consumers towards organic food products. The study has identified four variables that have direct influence on the attitude of consumers toward organic food. Based on this, the research objectives of the study are listed below:

- To identify the factors that influence consumers' attitude towards organic food products.

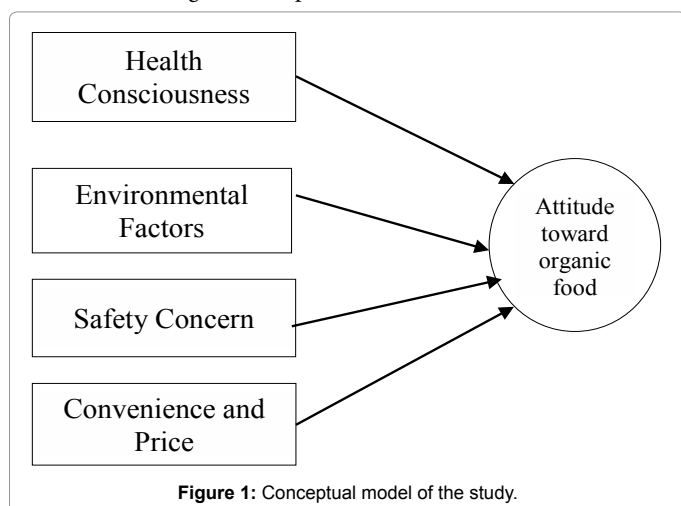


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study.

- To evaluate the influence of health consciousness of consumers on attitude towards organic food products.
- To study the relationship between concerns for environmental factors of consumers and attitude towards organic food products.
- To study the relationship between consumers' safety concern on attitude towards organic food products
- To explore the influence of convenience and price of organic food on the consumers' attitude towards organic food products.

Hypothesis

Based on the above objectives various hypotheses are framed which are listed here:

H1: Health consciousness has positive influence on attitude toward organic food;

H2: Environmental factors positively influences attitude towards organic food;

H3: Safety concern influences attitude towards organic food;

H4: Convenience and price has positive influence on attitude towards organic food.

Research Methodology

A survey instrument was designed and developed to collect data from the sample of the respondents consisting of a randomly selected sample of 49 consumers of organic purchasers from UAE. The attitude towards purchasing organic food products was measured based on the four independent variables namely health consciousness, environmental factors, safety concern and convenience and price. The data analysis was to study the relation between the dependent variable and the independent variables.

As a result of extensive review of related literature, around four variables were identified that are believed to affect the consumer's attitude towards purchasing organic food products. Each variable was measured using several items viz. Health Consciousness (5 items), Environmental Factors (5 items), Safety Concern (5 items) and Convenience and Price (9 items). Finally the dependent variable attitude towards organic food was measured using 5 items. The study used five point Likert scale with options like Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, and Strongly Agree=5.

Results and Discussion

Demographic characteristics

The demographic features of the section of this study are presented in Table 1. The gender of the sample consisted of 70.2 percent of female and 29.8 of male consumers. The majority of the sample aged below 31 years (61.7%). The mainstream of the sample consisted of married people (51.1 percent). Regarding religion, the majority of the respondents belonged to Muslim religion (59.6%). Around 87 percent of the respondents had a graduate degree and above. The majority of the respondents with 44.7 percent have income between AED 5001 - 10000. Concerning occupational status of the respondents, the majority group was found to be Accountant/Customer Service/Administrator (27.7%) closely followed by Middle/Supervisor (25.5%).

Descriptive statistics and correlation

The descriptive statistics, reliability statistics and correlation

analysis of the data is presented in Table 2. The results shows that respondents weigh high rating for the variable health consciousness (M=4.08, SD=0.5982) followed by safety concern with mean value of 4.07 and standard deviation of 0.5663. The rating for the other independent variable was also better. The mean rating for environment factors was (M=3.93, SD=0.6766) and the mean rating for convenient and price was (M=3.72, SD=0.6415).

The consistency factor of the scale items is presented in the Table 2. The Cronbach's value cutoff value should be above limit of 0.6. The overall reliability of the scale was found to be 0.914.

Particulars	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	33	70.2
	Female	14	29.8
Age(Years)	Below 31	29	61.7
	31-40	16	34
	41-50	2	4.3
Marital Status	Married	24	51.1
	Unmarried	22	46.8
	Widow	1	2.1
Religion	Muslim	28	59.6
	Christian	12	25.5
	Hindu	6	12.8
	Other	1	2.1
Educational Qualification	Higher Secondary and below	8	17
	Graduate	14	29.8
	Post-graduate and above	16	34
	Professional/Technical	9	19.1
Monthly Income	Less than 5000	10	21.3
	5001-10000	21	44.7
	10001-15000	8	17
	15001-20000	3	6.4
	20001-25000	4	8.5
	25001 and above	1	2.1
Occupational Status	Executive/Manager	8	17
	Middle/Supervisor	12	25.5
	Accountant/Customer Service/Administrator	13	27.7
	Self-employed (Business/Trade/Artisan, etc.)	1	2.1
	Professional (Doctor/Engineer/Consultant, etc.)	10	21.3
	Others	3	6.4

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the consumers.

The glassy of correlation among the variables was calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficient, level of significance are presented in Table 2. It is fascinating to find that the dependent variable attitude toward organic food has meaningfully optimistic correlation with all the independent variables like health consciousness, environmental factors, safety concern and convenience and price.

Regression analysis to test the hypothesis

The correlation analysis exhibit the positive relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Thus multiple regression examination has been directed to recognize the level of connection among the variables and to test the proposed hypothesis for this study (Table 3a-3c).

The dependent variable was Attitude towards organic food, and the independent variables are Health concern, Environmental concern, safety/trust, and Convenience and Price. The hypothesis was tested by using multiple linear regressions. The result showed that R square value was 0.999 and p value was lower than 0.05 (significant). Therefore, based on multiple regression analysis, the following are the hypothesis outcomes

H1: Health Consciousness is related to attitude toward organic food is accepted

H2: Environmental factors positively influences attitude towards organic food is accepted

H3: Safety concern influences attitude towards organic food is rejected

H4: Convenience and price has positive influence on attitude towards organic food rejected

Health concern: The dependent variable was attitude towards organic food. The hypothesis was verified by using multiple regressions. The outcome exposed that Beta co-efficiency value was 0.830 and p value was less than 0.05 (significant), which meant that the hypothesis (H1) need to be accepted. Hence, based on multiple regression analysis, Health factors is influencing attitude towards organic food.

Environmental concern: The dependent variable was attitude towards organic food. The hypothesis was verified by using multiple regressions. The outcome exposed that Beta co-efficiency value was 0.255 and p value was less than 0.05 (significant), which meant that the hypothesis (H2) need to be accepted. Hence, based on multiple

Variable	Mean	SD	Reliability	Health Consciousness	Environmental factors	Safety Concern	Convenience and price	Attitude towards organic food
Health Consciousness	4.08	0.598	0.773	1				
Environmental factors	3.93	0.677	0.736	.638	1			
Safety Concern	4.07	0.566	0.713	.576	.658	1		
Convenience and price	3.72	0.642	0.8	.438	.594	.564	1	
Attitude towards organic food	3.67	0.676	0.744	.620	.616	.604	.750	1

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations.

Model	R	R Square ^b	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
Dimens	1	.999 ^a	0.999	0.14012	0.999	8739.448	4	46	0

^aDependent Variable; ^bLinear Regression through the origin.

Table 3a: Multiple regression results for health, environment, safety, and convenience and price on attitude toward organic food.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Envi_mean	0.255	0.071	0.253	3.594	0.001
Health_mean	0.83	0.051	0.836	16.404	0
Safety_mean	-0.125	0.078	-0.127	-1.615	0.113
Convenience_mean	0.038	0.045	0.038	0.835	0.408

^aDependent Variable; ^bLinear Regression through the origin.

Table 3b: Coefficients^{a,b}.

Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
686.381	4	171.595	8739.448	.000
0.903	46	0.02		
687.284	50			

Table 3c: ANOVA

regression analysis, Environmental concern factors is influencing attitude towards organic food.

Safety concern: The dependent variable was attitude towards organic food. The hypothesis was verified by using multiple regressions. The outcome exposed that Beta co-efficiency value was -0.125 and p value was greater than 0.05 (significant), which meant that the hypothesis (H3) needs to be rejected. Hence, based on multiple regression analysis, safety concern factors is not influencing attitude towards organic food.

Convenience and price concern: The dependent variable was attitude towards organic food. The hypothesis was verified by using multiple regressions. The outcome exposed that Beta co-efficiency value was 0.038 and p value was greater than 0.05 (significant), which meant that the hypothesis (H4) need to be rejected. Hence, based on multiple regression analysis, convenience and price factors is not influencing attitude towards organic food.

Limitations

The sample size of the study was small, and hence it is suggested that care should be taken in generalizing the findings to a larger population. The study used simple random sampling which might have introduced biased results. Stratified random sampling can be considered in the future studies to improve the representativeness of the sample with respect to the population. The variables considered was not extensive further study can be extended further by calculating weight for each variable.

Conclusions

The findings of the study have direct implication for the organic food market in UAE. The consumer attitude toward organic food is the direct determinant of their purchasing intention. The results show that overall sample of respondents of the study hold health, and environmental concern has a positive attitude towards organic food products. Consumer believes organic food is good for their healthy life study and safe guard the environment. The results of the study further show that the safety concern has negative concern, though consumers know the organic food is safer than conventional food, but the attitude towards the organic food is not influences by the safety concern. The authority should create the confidence among the consumer regards to their safety concern by following the strict regulation, or display the strict regulation the organic food process go through. Convenience and price doesn't really influence the influence the organic food buyers. A further clear in depth study need to understand the safety measure and convenience and price to generalize the findings must try to show market the important of safety measure they reasons advocated by the

consumers for buying organic food products are varied. The primary motivations behind their decision to purchase included concerns for health consciousness, and environmental factors. The demographic factors are found to have no significant implication on the attitude toward organic food. The reason could be that the size of the sample was small, and distribution was not uniform.

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