

Organic Meat Purchase Intention Among Malay Working Adults and Gender Mediation Test: A Conceptual Study

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims to explore Malay working adults' tastes and motivations towards organic meat consumption in Malaysia. The study is about promoting organic meat to improve the environment and individual health. The independent variables considered in this study are health consciousness, meat characteristics, subjective norms, and the mediating variable of gender. The study will employ a qualitative research method to gain in-depth insights into the attitudes and behaviours of Malay working adults towards organic meat consumption. The research will involve conducting an online survey questionnaire that will be distributed online among Malay working adults in Malaysia. The participants will be selected through convenience sampling to ensure representation from diverse backgrounds and demographics within the Malay community. The data collected from the qualitative interviews and focus group discussions will be analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights related to the tastes and motivations of Malay working adults towards organic meat consumption.

Keywords:

Organic Meats; Purchase Intention; Health Consciousness; Meat Characteristics; Subjective Norms; Gender

1 Introduction

Organic meat in Malaysia has been around since the early 1990s, when people cared more about the environment and their health (Somasundram et al., 2015). The "Malaysian Organic Scheme" (SOM) of the Department of Agriculture Malaysia defines "organic" meat in Malaysia. This method defines organic meat as animal-raised under natural settings. They should also be provided organic feed without synthetic ingredients, no growth promoters or hormones, and no antibiotics unless necessary. Malaysian organic meat research is crucial for various reasons. With more individuals concerned about health and the environment, it's crucial to understand organic meat production, use, and market. This research can assist pass regulations encouraging farmers to care for the environment and their crops. It can also reveal consumer behaviour and preferences, helping producers and sellers adapt to changing markets (Hsu et al., 2018). Looking at Malaysia's organic meat production standards and compliance ensures quality and safety, giving customers healthier options. This study aids the national plan to promote sustainable development and healthy eating, which matches global food production and consumption.

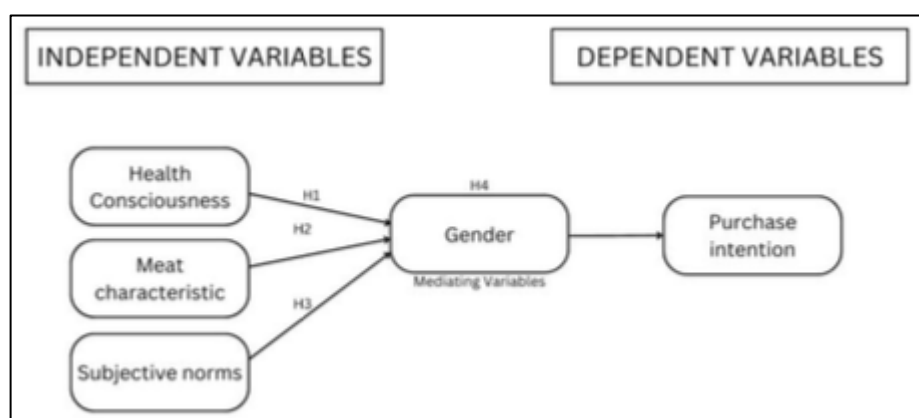


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework adopted from Wong, S. S., & Aini, M. S. (2017).

By referring to the conceptual framework above, it is expected to suggest an in-depth quantitative study to the purchase intention among Malay working adults towards organic meat. Following this, the study-specific aims are:

- H₁: There is a positive significant relationship between health consciousness and purchase intention of organic meat among Malay working adults.
- H₂: There is a positive significant relationship between meat characteristics and purchase intention of organic meat among Malay working adults.
- H₃: There is a positive significant relationship between subjective norms and purchase intention of organic meat among Malay working adults.
- H₄: Gender mediates the relationship between organic meat consumption and purchase intention.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Health Consciousness

Label information can ensure safe items and promote health awareness, argue Viola et al. (2016). Kumar et al. (2018) indicates consumers worry about fresh meat chemicals and hormones. Some think organic food is "healthier" than ordinary food. Organic foods are thought to taste better, contain fewer pesticides and synthetic fertilisers, and provide more minerals and health-protecting phytochemicals (Crinnion, 2010). The researcher studies health consciousness and organic meat buying intention as a complex topic. Organic meat is seen as healthier and more sustainable by health-conscious consumers who value fewer hazardous ingredients. Misinformation about what constitutes "organic," confusion due to inconsistent labelling, the higher cost of organic meat leading to accessibility issues, and ethical dilemmas related to animal welfare and environmental sustainability can tarnish this perception. These issues emphasise the need for accurate information, education, and responsible marketing to help consumers make health- and ethics-based decisions. The complexity of this issue emphasises the need for a cultural transition towards sustainable consumption practices that promote health consciousness and ameliorate the identified issues. The following hypotheses are based on the previous arguments:

H₁: There is a positive significant relationship between health consciousness and purchase intention of organic meat among Malay working adults.

2.2 Meat Characteristic

Numerous studies have shown that food selection is based on sensory attractiveness (Angood et al., 2008). Zhang et al. (2018) found meat preferences differ in China, the US, and Europe. Consumers choose meat based on its taste. Krystallis and Arvanitoyannis (2006) say customers judge meat quality by flavour, tenderness, juiciness, freshness, leanness, and vivid red colour. A food item like organic meat has several sensory features, including gustatory, olfactory, visual, and tactile qualities. According to the researcher, Malaysians are more likely to buy organic beef if it looks and smells good, is healthy, is culturally significant, and is affordable. Organic meat tastes, feels, and is healthier, therefore people buy it. However, lack of knowledge about organic certification, higher cost, restricted supply, ethnic tastes, and inconsistent labelling and regulation can make organic meat challenging to accept. Buyer behaviour in Malaysia is further confounded by environmental values, which vary by group. Producers, marketers, and lawmakers must respect Malaysian consumers' cultural, economic, and personal tastes to solve these issues. It highlights how crucial education, standardisation, and strategic positioning are for organic meat to achieve consumer expectations in this area. As a result, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

H₂: There is a positive significant relationship between meat characteristics and purchase intention of organic meat among Malay working adults.

2.3 Subjective norms

The subjective norm is a consumer's predisposition to do what key individuals in their social group, such as family, friends, and love partners, expect (Kim et al., 2013). The theory of needs states that people do what their loved ones or referent group thinks is good because they need social bonds and a sense of belonging (Voon et al., 2011). Canova et al. (2020) argue reference group norms strongly influence customer behaviour. A person's purchase decision is influenced by strong social norms regarding consuming organic beef among friends. People who think their close relatives eat organic food or wish to hang out with organic eaters are more likely to eat it (Kamboj, 2023). However, people will buy less organic meat if they think prominent people don't like it. With the above notion, the following is hypothesized:

H₃: There is a positive significant relationship between subjective norms and purchase intention of organic meat among Malay working adults.

2.4 Gender

Gender affects many aspects of human conduct, including consumption. After extensive research, Gundala et al. (2022) found significant gender variations in purchase behaviour. McFadden & Huffman (2017) found that organic beef consumption has risen. Onyango et al. (2007) found that young people and women buy organic beef more. Despite a gradual increase in organic meat consumption, the literature is divided on gender and organic food consumption. The contradictory findings of many studies cause this misunderstanding. Studies show that men and women consume organic food differently (Magnusson et al., 2001; Rimal, 2005). In contrast, Tsakiridou et al. (2008) observed no gender differences in organic food attitudes and consumption. This may be because women are more environmentally sensitive and accountable than men (Yue et al., 2020). Straughan and Roberts (1999) and Hofstede (2001) found gender differences in social goal and group connectivity prioritisation. Women value social relationships more than males. Noble et al. (2006) found that women prefer socialising more than males. Recker & Saleem (2014) discovered that female organic meat buyers were more susceptible to peer influence. The following hypotheses are based on the previous arguments:

H₄: Gender mediates the relationship between organic meat consumption and purchase intention.

2.5 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is crucial to marketing and consumer behaviour research. It measures the chance of a consumer buying a product or service in the future (Abdullah et al., 2022). Perceived value—the consumer's judgement of a product's utility based on what is received and given—is a major influence in purchase intention (Li et al., 2022). This suggests that consumers are more inclined to buy a product or service if they think the advantages outweigh the costs (including time, effort, and psychological cost).

Consumer opinions regarding a product or service also affect buying intention. Their opinions of the product or service are often shaped by advertising, word of mouth, and personal experience (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Trust and brand reputation affect purchasing intent (Ellitan et al., 2022). Consumers buy more from trusted and high-quality brands. Having a strong, good brand image helps boost purchasing intent. Social impact affects buying intent (Yang et al., 2023). Family and friend suggestions, online reviews, and influencers are included. In conclusion, perceived value, customer attitudes, brand reputation, and social influence affect purchase intention.

3 Methodology

The research methodology section explains the questionnaire design, data collection and data analysis procedure.

3.1 The Questionnaire Designs

This research will use questionnaires that consist of four sections to gather the data from respondents. - A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree will develop. The questionnaire will start on the respondents' demographic profile. Next, the questionnaire requires the respondents to evaluate the health consciousness for the first section. The second and third sections contain questions related to meat characteristics and subjective norms. Gender as a mediating variable will be measured using a total of four items.

3.2 Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis Procedure

The study focuses on consumers who intend to purchase organic meat. An online survey will be conducted to deliver the questionnaire to the respondents. Data collection consists of two distinct processes. The initial phase is conducting a pilot study with at least 85 participants. Subsequently, the researcher will employ IBM SPSS (Version 26) for data input, coding, normality testing, and descriptive methods, including frequencies, mean, standard deviations, and reliability testing. The second phase of the data collection process involves distributing online surveys. The convenience sampling method, implemented through the use of SPSS, is employed to choose data from the sample frame due to the unavailability of the precise total population count (Tabachnick et al., 2007). Furthermore, the samples will be chosen from the sampling frame according to the recommended guidelines for sample size proposed by (Tabachnick et al. 2007). The researchers will advocate employing the confidence interval as a mathematical expression to determine the sample size of the investigation. Complex mediation and moderation analyses may be required for specific research inquiries. Statisticians have devised tools that can be employed with widely used statistical software to facilitate the execution and comprehension of intricate studies. A device that fits this description is the Smart PLS-SEM.

4 Discussions

This study proposes a conceptual framework that integrates health consciousness, meat characteristic and subjective norm of the consumer purchase intentions towards organic meat. The study will select the consumer who have experience consuming organic meat will be as the target population, and an online survey will be conducted. The proposed conceptual model will offer insightful information about in measuring the health consciousness, meat characteristic and subjective norms among the consumer whom have the intention to purchase the organic meat. This study expects to discover a significant positive relationship between the health consciousness, meat characteristics and subjective norms and purchase intention on organic meat. Most importantly, this study will test one mediating effects on the relationship between meat consumption and purchase intention towards organic meat.

5 Theoretical and Practical Contribution

Many empirical researches have examined Asian organic food consumers. Some research has examined how much consumers are willing to spend for organic goods, how satisfied they are with them, and how they feel about organic food outlets. Other research has examined organic food choices and consumer perceptions, making them more relevant to this paper. The Malaysian organic meat sector differs greatly. This study examines Malaysian Malay working people to bridge the knowledge gap on what drives organic meat purchases. Despite needing complete origin knowledge, consumers buy organic meat. Consumers need help distinguishing organic from conventionally farmed items. The growing interest in organic meats may suffer.

This research allows scholars and aspiring researchers to fill the vacuum and add to the field. This study will help instructors educate students about organic food options and help future researchers understand consumer intention and organic meat buying behaviour. This study may help future researchers and academics collect and analyse data more consistently. In future studies, this research method can be employed to study similar factors. Additional research will be added to the survey to better understand organic meat customer intention and purchasing behaviour.

6 Conclusion

This study will help educators better inform their students about organic food options and give future researchers a better understanding of the connection between consumer intention and actual organic meat purchase behaviour. Organic meat is a good choice for people who care about their health and the environment. With the contributions from the outlined conceptual framework, it will hopefully not only improve the insight on the organic meat purchase intention. The study will select the consumer who have experience consuming organic meat as the target population, and an online survey will be conducted. The proposed conceptual model will offer insightful information in measuring the health consciousness, meat characteristic and subjective norms among the consumer who have the intention to purchase the organic meat. Thus,

a conceptual framework integrating the organic meat purchase intention among Malay working adults is proposed to fill the gap and align with the earlier issues.

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