

FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER'S BEHAVIOUR ON PURCHASING AND CONSUMPTION OF FOOD PRODUCTS

Ismail Bulent GURBUZ, Modassir MACABANGIN

Bursa Uludag University, Agricultural Faculty, Department of Agricultural Economics, 16059 Bursa, Turkey, Phone: +902242941591, Mobile: +905322837563 E-mails: bulent@uludag.edu.tr, modassirmacabangin@gmail.com,

Corresponding author: bulent@uludag.edu.tr

Abstract

Study of consumer's behaviour is important in developing marketing strategy. Consumer behaviour refers to the attitude that the consumer shows during the search, purchase and consumption of a certain product. According to literatures, correlated factors such as; economic, cultural, and psychological factors mostly affect the decision of the consumers whether to accept or reject a food product in the market. The purpose of this paper is to identify the main factors that affect consumer behaviour during the purchase and consumption of an existing food product in the market. The recent study shows many significant differences of the purchasing and consumption attitude between undergraduate and foundation degree students. Consumers have become more dependent on their own preferences by observing sensual attributes of the foodstuffs. Moreover, complete understanding of these identified factors is essential in order to develop an effective marketing strategy.

Key words: consumer's behaviour, food consumption, purchasing behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Increase in globalization, leads food market industries in getting more complex and competitive situation [13]. At the present time, food sector is entitled as one of the major important sectors in global economy and it brought serious attention to the most of institutions and authorities [20]. Despite of the recognition being an important sector, businesses that operates in line with the food industry still faces major problems [30], mainly in terms of competing their products in the market [31]. Since in marketing, consumers are considered as the king, each and every institution desires to intensify their marketing range and income by satisfying the needs of their customers [38]. Widening market capabilities includes psychological observation of the target and potential market individualities in consuming a certain goods. Consumer approach towards foods is influenced by several aspects, which prejudice the costumer's preferences and their decision whether to accept or reject produced goods [24]. Consumer behaviour means the procedure of the costumers making a decision

concerning the product of his choice whether to purchase and acquire an existing product or not [18]. Customer's attitude towards a certain product has always been affected by several factors such as cultural, lifestyle, psychological and economic factors [3]. Study of consumers behaviour are mainly used in developing marketing strategies which requires knowledge of the customers tastes and preferences [18][36]. The purpose of this research is to identify the major factors influencing the attitude of the consumers in buying and consumption of a certain food product.

Consumers' Behaviour

Consumer behaviour refers to the attitude that the consumer shows during the search, purchase and consumption of a certain product [36][40]. In today's generation, globalization plays a big role on the continuous growth in food sector [5]. Developing countries started to adapt the concept of digital revolution in production of goods. This concept enables much effective ways on product customization, services and much efficient strategies than older marketing tools [29]. However, while development in

food sector increases, consumer's attitudes and perception towards food products are also evolving.

Most of the companies conduct a consumer behaviour study to improve and develop their marketing strategy [25]. One of the common concepts of conducting strategic marketing analysis is observing the economic status or demographic characteristics of the consumers (ages, gender, level of education, economic stability, etc.) [40][32]. Thru this, the organization could determine the characteristics of their target customer. There are plenty of researchers who used demographic analysis in developing their marketing strategy. Generally, aside from indicating the characteristics of an individual customer, demographic study also shows the ability of the customers to buy a certain product [1]. The consumer's level in the economy could slightly influence their behaviour of consumption. For example, lower generating income individual or family, basically will be more concern of the price of a certain product, while consumers with higher income are more on the quality and less sensitive on the price of the goods [41]. However, regardless of the amount of income of every individual or household, it can be considered that the price of the food products directly affects their purchasing practices [28]. In addition, an individual or family with higher quality of life has more probability of demanding more trusted product in terms of quality, health and hygiene [39].

Marketers could manipulate the behaviour of the buyers but they don't have complete control on it [11]. Other factors which affect the behaviour of the food consumers are based on cultural aspects [14][21]. In modern society, cultural aspects and consumption have substantial connection [2]. Cultural factors include; ethics, tradition, belief, customs, language and etc. that are conveyed from generation to generation. Culture is the vital identity of an individual or group of people that differentiates it from other groups in the society. This factor does not just give impact to the behaviour of the customers, yet it also put limitations on the choice of purchase of the consumers. For example, you

can't expect to sell a ton of pork meat in a group of society with a huge number of Muslims. Anyanwu (1993) observes that Muslims do not eat meat from pork; many marketing strategists have tried to change this behaviour but failed. Culture has put limitation on the choice of consumers and it's hardly unchangeable [12].

Aside from cultural traditions, consumer's buying practices can also be affected by some correlated factors such as, product appearance, flavour or taste, nutritional value, food preferences, convenience and food suitability [6]. In addition perception, motivation, learning and attitudes of the consumers also have an impact on how they react towards a food product. These features are often called as psychological factors [19]. Among these, perception and motivation are the most important norms. Motivation means the level of urgency in which an individual seeks satisfaction [35]. The higher the level of necessity of the person, the higher the possibility of him/her buying a certain product. When we talk about perception, it is all about the senses of a person he uses towards a certain product. A human being, considerably has more than five senses, (i.e. taste, smell, touch, hearing and sight) there are also sense of direction and sense of balance [6][11]. Basically, these are the basis of the customer in purchasing a certain food product. Needs and preferences of the customers are basically the main reason why today's consumers are considered to be "the king" in marketing. Simply because, innovation of a product are mainly based on the needs and the preferences of the customers. Vision also serves a huge role in capturing the interest and attention of the consumers as well as setting the consumer's expectation from an existing product [16][37]. Strategists used colour relatively to packaging process in order to catch immediately the attention of the buyers [27].

Over the last decades, the consumers are being more conscious already towards food product in the market. Aside from the characteristics of the products used to satisfy their preferences, they are also concern of the benefits they can get after consumption.

They've become more knowledgeable about the products in the market. Buyers are worrying about the qualities in terms of health and safety of food because of the crisis they encounter during consumption of a certain product [15]. Food being one of the basic needs of human being, health and safety are one of the most important factors that affect human behaviour towards available food products in the market. Especially in developing countries which are believed to becoming more industrialize. Nowadays, processed foods are largely occupying more space on the market [38]. This means food products with doubtful backgrounds and class (quality) has been submerged in the market [4]. Several years have passed; the numbers of consumers shifting on organically produced food products are increasing [10]. Organic foods are expected to be safer, healthier and tastier to consume than the conventional foods or processed foods on the market [26][34]. It is necessary to completely understand the mentioned factors above in order to improve marketing method referring to consumers' behaviour [7].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out at Uludag University. Uludag University is the seventh largest university in the country. It accommodates 74,822 students 42,917 of whom undergraduate, in 14 faculties, 4 institutes, and 15 vocational schools.

The computation was as follows:

$$n = (t^2[1+(0.02)(b-1)]pq)/E^2,$$

where n is the sample size, t is the significance level (assumed to be 95%), p is the probability of the situation being searched (assumed to be 50%), q is the probability of the situation not being searched (1 - p), and d is the accepted error (assumed to be 5%). If b is equal to 1, the equation 1 is transformed into the following equation:

$$n = (t^2 * pq) / E^2$$

Using the formula:

$$n = (t^2 * pq) / E^2 =$$

$$[(1.96)^2 * (0.50 * 0.50)] / (0.05)^2 = 384$$

Hence, the minimum sample size is 384. For this study, 440 participants were used in order to reach the reasonable results. The survey is the most used method in socio-economic research, being the most popular and sometimes identified with the sociological research itself.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Survey has been conducted with a total of 440 respondents who are all students. Among the respondents, 45% were female students and 55% were male. About 300 students have associate degree programs and 140 have undergraduate degree programs. Majority of associate degree students are in the 17-19 age groups, the majority of undergraduate students are between the ages of 20-22 years old.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC	Total	%	Foundation degree (Vocational School)	%	Undergraduate	%	
Gender	Female	198	45%	140	46.7%	82	41.4%
	Male	242	55%	160	53.3%	58	58.6%
	Total	440	100%	300	100%	140	100%
Age	17-19	210	47.7%	210	140	-	-
	20-22	150	34.1%	84	56	66	27.1
	23-25	54	12.3%	6	4	48	34.3
	26-31	26	5.9%	-	-	26	18.6
	Total	440	100%	300	100%	140	100%
Income	<500	90	20.5%	90	30%	-	-
	501-750	220	50%	182	60.7%	38	27.1
	751-1000	76	17.3%	24	8%	52	37.1
	1001-1250	30	6.8%	4	1.3%	26	18.6
	1251+	24	5.4%	-	-	24	17.2
Total	440	100%	300	100%	140	100%	

Source: Own calculation.

Within the scope of the research, the students were group according to their monthly income and computed by percentage. As a result, 20.5% of the respondents belong to the group of <500 TL/month earners and there are only associate degree students in this group. While, majority of the respondents from associate degree students belong to the group of 501-750 TL/month earners with 60.1% and only 27.1 % coming from under graduate students. Meanwhile, the majority of the undergraduate students earn 751-1,000TL per month with 37.1% in ratio and the rest from them earns more than 1,000TL per month.

As a results show, the undergraduate students has higher monthly income than that of the associate degree students. It is thought that this factor may affect the purchasing and consumption attitude of the respondents toward food products. Thru that, it will be examine whether this aspect has significant impact on how the two different groups react upon purchasing and consuming a food product.

Consumption and purchasing preferences of food products

The researcher used five Likert’s scale to determine the food purchasing and consumption attitude of the respondents. Then, the internal consistency of the questions on the scale was validated by calculating the value of alpha. It was determined that the value of alpha is equal to 0.779 or ($\alpha = 0.779$) and this number indicates that the scale is reliable and acceptable. According to this, there is no finding of any factor that negatively affects the internal consistency of the statements that contain the criteria and consumer behaviours of the respondents in the survey concerning the purchase of food products.

Within the scope of the research, the student participants of the study were asked about the criteria that serve as an important factor which influence their decisions on purchasing and consuming food products. The results of the scale are shown in table 2.

Base on the results, it has been identified that the first concern of the student participants in buying and consuming a certain product is the quality of the foodstuffs. 87.3% of the respondents agreed with this criterion. The price got the least amount of rate with only 49.5% and 30% of disagreement as the most important factor to influencing the consumers’ purchasing behaviour. Nutritional value got the second highest rate with 75.4% and “brand” got 66.4% of vote. However, when the responses collected from the students are examined separately in terms of their educational status, it is observed that the respondents with an associate degree level pointed out the nutritional value as the most important criterion, while the majority of the undergraduate students chose the quality of

the food as the most significant factor upon acquiring or consuming a certain food product.

Table 2. Consumer Preferences towards Food Products
 F-Foundation Degree
 U-Undergraduate Degree

Important Aspect	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	No idea %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	F	U	MEAN Total
Brand of the food	12.7%	11.4%	9.5%	50.0%	16.4%	3.39	3.61	3.46
Quality of the food	2.7%	5.9%	4.1%	47.3%	40.0%	3.98	4.54	4.16
Price of the food	10.0%	20.0%	20.5%	25.9%	23.6%	3.54	2.88	3.33
Nutrient of the food	1.8%	4.5%	18.2%	45.9%	29.5%	4.07	3.74	3.97

Source: Own calculation.

In addition, undergraduate students having higher income than the associate degree students, these results clearly indicate that demographic factors of the consumers such as level of income and educational status vary upon purchasing a food product. In other words, the customers with a higher income are more likely to demand higher quality of food products than those with lower income [17]. Many researchers also stated that demographic factors serve as an important variable in determining the purchasing behaviour of the customers [10][23][33][40].

Table 3. Value of t and p

		Mean	Standard Deviation	t value	Sig
Brand on the food	Foundation	3.39	1.31	-1.255	0.211
	Undergraduate	3.61	1.13		
Quality of the food	Foundation	3.98	1.05	-4.252	0.000*
	Undergraduate	4.54	0.50		
Price of the food	Foundation	3.54	1.30	3.555	0.000*
	Undergraduate	2.88	1.20		
Nutrient of the food	Foundation	4.07	0.95	2.544	0.012*
	Undergraduate	3.74	0.77		

*p<0.05

Source: Own calculation.

Base on the table 3, the students who participated in the study found the quality of the product as the most important criteria when buying a food product. As a result of the T-tests, it is observed that there is a significant difference in determining the importance of the quality (p=0.00<0.05), price (p=0.00<0.05) and nutritional value (p=0.00<0.05). The study of Uçar et al. (2012) also concluded that quality and price shows

significant difference if we talk about educational level of the respondents [39]. According to Nowicki & Sikora (2015), sensual features, nutritional value and price of the food product are the most significant factors determining the attitude of the consumers in the marketplace [24]. Meanwhile, one important finding of the current study is that there is no significant

difference between the respondents regarding the importance of the brand in the food products.

Within the scope of the research, students were asked about their preference and the importance of these features when purchasing food items. The results obtained are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Specifications when Purchasing Food Products
 (f) Foundatin Degree – Vocational School – 2 years in university
 (u) Undergraduate – Faculty

Specifications	Strongly Disagree			Disagree			No Idea			Agree			Strongly Agree		
	F	U	%	F	U	%	F	U	%	F	U	%	F	U	%
Quality	8	-	1.8	42	-	9.5	-	-	-	126	58	41.8	124	88	46.9
Taste & Flavour	-	-	-	4	0	0.9	-	-	-	102	42	32.7	194	98	66.4
Nutrition	-	-	-	18	16	7.7	20	4	5.5	136	80	49.1	126	40	37.7
Food integrands	-	-	-	40	6	10.5	30	14	10.0	98	72	38.6	132	48	40.9
Price	14	4	4.1	34	20	12.3	12	8	4.5	128	84	48.2	112	24	30.9
Label information	8	6	3.2	48	18	15.0	24	18	9.5	138	78	49.1	82	20	23.2
Food Security	-	-	-	10	6	3.6	16	8	5.5	90	48	31.4	184	78	59.5
Food Processing & hygiene	-	-	-	10	-	2.3	16	14	6.8	96	40	30.9	178	86	60.0
Brand Name	30	8	8.6	46	20	15.0	34	8	9.5	122	90	48.3	68	14	18.6
Date of Production & Expiration	-	-	-	6	-	1.4	10	-	2.3	38	18	12.7	246	122	83.6
Pure and Natural Food	4	-	0.9	44	4	10.9	24	32	12.7	116	72	42.8	112	32	32.7
Freshness	-	-	-	8	6	3.2	4	-	0.9	90	62	34.5	198	72	61.4
Design and Type of packaging	40	16	12.7	84	44	29.1	18	6	5.5	104	62	37.7	54	12	15.0
Packaging material	38	6	10.0	56	18	16.8	42	30	16.4	112	54	37.7	52	32	19.1
Product advertising	80	28	24.5	74	46	27.3	46	8	12.3	68	52	27.3	32	6	8.6
Promotion	14	12	5.9	24	28	11.8	18	20	8.6	104	50	35.0	140	30	38.7

Source: Own calculation.

As shown in Table 4, 83.6% of the respondents found the production and expiration date very important. Base on the students, the rates of food processing and hygiene, taste and flavour and freshness are high; and there is none of the respondents think of these criteria as not important at all. The percentage of those who think that product advertising has a greater impact on food purchasing than the other criteria has a minimum proportion in the results of the research. There are 8.6% who find product advertisement as important factor and 24.5% think of this criterion as not important at all. Meanwhile, 16.4% of the respondents are undecided in the importance of packaging

material in purchasing food product. This ratio has the highest rate among the other criteria that belong to undecided group in the study.

However, about 99.1% stated that they “Agree” and “Strongly agree” of the taste and preferences of the food product being the most important. All of the undergraduate students have agreed that taste & preference are important specification that influences their purchasing behaviour, while out of 300 associate students 296 also chose to agree. These finding clearly indicates that sensual characteristics of the food product is the first criterion that the customer observes upon purchasing food product.

Table 5 shows different criteria that the respondents give importance on purchasing food items. As a result of T-tests, quality ($p=0.00<0.05$) and promotion ($p=0.00<0.05$) criteria, shows difference among associate and undergraduate students.

Table 5. Properties and Importance of Purchasing Food

	Education level	Mean	Standard Deviation	t value	Sig
Quality	Foundation	4.05	1.11	-4.171	0.000*
	Undergraduate	4.63	0.49		
Taste & Flavour	Foundation	4.62	0.56	-1.036	0.301
	Undergraduate	4.70	0.46		
Nutrition	Foundation	4.23	0.82	1.679	0.095
	Undergraduate	4.03	0.88		
Food integrands	Foundation	4.07	1.04	-0.602	0.548*
	Undergraduate	4.16	0.77		
Label information	Foundation	3.79	1.09	1.061	0.290
	Undergraduate	3.63	1.02		
Food Security	Foundation	4.49	0.75	0.717	0.474
	Undergraduate	4.41	0.79		
Food Processing & hygiene	Foundation	4.47	0.75	0.390	0.697
	Undergraduate	4.51	0.68		
Brand Name	Foundation	3.51	1.27	0.453	0.651
	Undergraduate	3.59	1.04		
Date of Production & Expiration	Foundation	4.75	0.62	-1.588	0.114
	Undergraduate	4.87	0.34		
Pure and Natural Food	Foundation	3.96	1.08	0.120	0.905
	Undergraduate	3.94	0.76		
Freshness	Foundation	4.59	0.65	1.686	0.093
	Undergraduate	4.443	0.71		
Design and Type of packaging	Foundation	3.16	1.36	0.459	0.646
	Undergraduate	3.07	1.25		
Packaging material	Foundation	3.28	1.30	-1.938	0.054
	Undergraduate	3.63	1.11		
Product advertising	Foundation	2.66	1.36	0.354	0.723
	Undergraduate	2.73	1.27		
Promotion	Foundation	4.11	1.12	4.082	0.000*
	Undergraduate	3.41	1.27		

* $p<0.05$

Source: Own calculation.

When we look at the means, it is seen that the date of production and expiration criterion is first in terms of importance. While, for the students with associate degree, the least important criterion is the advertisement of the product and the packaging material is the lowest for undergraduate degree students.

Although some consumers are sometimes not checking the indicated expiration date on the label of the product [8], Lorenz, Hartmann, & Simons (2015) stated that consumers habitually discard eatable goods with alterations in visual, sensual appearance, or product which passed the expiration date already [22].

The respondents were asked about the regularity or frequency of their consumption of different food product. The results are shown in the table 6.

Base on the result of the T-test, the frequency of consumption of white meat products ($p=0.00<0.05$) and red meat ($p=0.00<0.05$)

were significantly different among associate degree and undergraduate students. Also, the consumption of milk and dairy products ($p=0,006<0.05$), frozen foods ($p=0,007<0.05$) and flour Foods ($p=0,035<0.05$) shows difference according to educational status.

Table 6. Distribution of respondents' opinion on organic products information accessibility depending on age

	Education level	Mean	Standard Deviation	t value	Sig
Vegetables	Foundation	4.05	1.11	-4.171	0.000*
	Undergraduate	4.63	0.49		
Fruits	Foundation	4.62	0.56	-1.036	0.301
	Undergraduate	4.70	0.46		
White Meat	Foundation	4.23	0.82	1.679	0.095
	Undergraduate	4.03	0.88		
Red Meat	Foundation	4.07	1.04	-0.602	0.548*
	Undergraduate	4.16	0.77		
Dairy Products	Foundation	3.79	1.09	1.061	0.290
	Undergraduate	3.63	1.02		
Dry Legumes	Foundation	4.49	0.75	0.717	0.474
	Undergraduate	4.41	0.79		
Frozen	Foundation	4.47	0.75	-0.390	0.697
	Undergraduate	4.51	0.68		
Bakery Products	Foundation	3.51	1.27	-0.453	0.651
	Undergraduate	3.59	1.04		
Others	Foundation	4.75	0.62	-1.588	0.114
	Undergraduate	4.87	0.34		

* $p<0.05$

Source: Own calculation

Table 6 shows that vegetable is the most frequently consumed. The food that receives lowest consumption is frozen products; followed by the red meat products. When the means are observed, the most frequently consumed food by the undergraduate students is white meat products, while the most common food consumed by undergraduate students is vegetables. Both groups have the same results of least consumed food which is the bakery products. Jabir Ali, Sanjeev Kapoor, Jana Kiraman Moorthy (2010) concluded that fruits and vegetables are frequently purchased due to their perishable nature [3].

CONCLUSIONS

The recent study concluded that the respondents which have higher income are more conscious of the quality of the food that they purchase and those who have lower

income are more focus on the nutritional value. Consumer behaviour attitude measurement statements revealed a number of significant differences between associate degree student and undergraduate students. In analysing the data obtained using t-test, it is observed that there is a significant difference in determining the importance the quality ($p=0.00<0.05$), price ($p=0.00<0.05$) and nutritional value ($p=0.00<0.05$) as well as the promotion ($p=0.00<0.05$) criteria. The study also indicates that that taste & preference are important specification in determining the purchasing and consumption behaviour of the food consumers. However, one of the important results of this research is that today's food consumers are getting more attentive of the food product durability by checking the expiration date of the food products. Earlier than these years, marketers could easily manipulate the consumers attitude using the old marketing tools of advertising, promotion, elegant packaging and another aspects provided by the product innovators. However, the recent study concluded that today's consumers are harder to please using these old marketing tools. In fact, consumers have now started emphasizing more on their own preferences by observing the sensual characteristics of the product.

In marketing, consumers are considered as the king. In which companies or any organization's main goal is to identify the needs of their customers and give them satisfaction. In order to have effective and efficient marketing strategy, complete understanding of consumer's behaviour in consumption and buying a certain product is a significant approach.

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