



Organic food consumption in Taiwan: Motives, involvement, and purchase intention under the moderating role of uncertainty



Chih-Ching Teng^{*}, Chi-Heng Lu

Department of Restaurant, Hotel and Institutional Management, Fu Jen Catholic University, 510 Chung Cheng Rd., Hsinchuang Dist., New Taipei City, 24205, Taiwan

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18 August 2015
Received in revised form
2 May 2016
Accepted 6 May 2016
Available online 10 May 2016

Keywords:

Consumption motives
Involvement
Purchase intention
Uncertainty
Organic foods

ABSTRACT

Despite the progressive development of the organic food sector in Taiwan, little is known about how consumers' consumption motives will influence organic food decision through various degrees of involvement and whether or not consumers with various degrees of uncertainty will vary in their intention to buy organic foods. The current study aims to examine the effect of consumption motives on behavioral intention related to organic food consumption under the mediating role of involvement as well as the moderating role of uncertainty. Research data were collected from organic food consumers in Taiwan via a questionnaire survey, eventually obtaining 457 valid questionnaires for analysis. This study tested the overall model fit and hypotheses through structural equation modeling method (SEM). The results show that consumer involvement significantly mediates the effects of health consciousness and ecological motives on organic food purchase intention, but not applied to food safety concern. Moreover, the moderating effect of uncertainty is statistical significance, indicating that the relationship between involvement and purchase intention becomes weaker in the condition of consumers with higher degree of uncertainty. Several implications and suggestions are also discussed for organic food providers and marketers.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

1. Introduction

Various food safety incidents and environmental issues have increased worldwide consumers' concern about the quality, safety, and environmental-friendliness of foods (Central News Agency, 2013; Hsu & Chen, 2014; Liu, Pieniak, & Verbeke, 2013). This phenomenon has caused consumers to be more aware of possible pesticide residues in conventional foods, the overuse of pesticides and chemical materials harmful to the environment, and the credence of production method (Fernqvist & Ekelund, 2014; Yee, Yeung, & Morris, 2005), which in turn raises questions about modern agricultural practices as well as stimulates the demand for organic foods (Mondelaers, Verbeke, & Van Huylenbroeck, 2009). In an investigation of Taiwanese organic food consumers, Chen (2007) attempted to define organic foods as foods that are not genetically modified and are produced in a natural way and specifically without the use of synthetic chemicals such as pesticides

and fertilizers. Consumers tend to consider organic foods healthier, safer, and less damaging to the environment than conventionally grown foods (Mondelaers et al., 2009; Rimal, Moon, & Balasubramanian, 2006). In response to the demand for organic foods, organic farming which aims to reflect the profound inter-relationship that exists between farm biota, its production, and the overall environment, as well as respects the natural cycles of an ecosystem thus has been promoted in many countries (European Commission, 2013). In Taiwan, the area of organic farmland increased from 1018 ha in 2002 to 5015 ha in 2011, indicating a rapid compound annual growth rate of 19% (Taiwan Organic Information Portal, 2013). The progressive development of the organic food sector in Taiwan reveals the need for better understanding of Taiwanese organic food consumption.

The topic of organic consumption motives has been widely discussed by previous studies. Michaelidou and Hassan (2010) pointed out that consumers' motives to purchase organic products include social/cultural reasons (e.g., social image), economic reasons (e.g., price), product reasons (e.g., quality), and personal reasons (e.g., health and safety). In particular, concern for health, food safety, taste, environmental protection, animal welfare, and

^{*} Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: chihchingteng@gmail.com (C.-C. Teng), zoolatryzx@gmail.com (C.-H. Lu).

support for local economy, have been identified as driving forces to the choice of organic foods (Hamm & Gronefeld, 2004; Hughner, McDonagh, Prothero, Shultz, & Stanton, 2007; Schleenbecker & Hamm, 2013; Yiridoe, Bonti-Ankomah, & Martin, 2005). Hemmerling, Hamm, and Spiller (2015) conducted a literature review of organic food consumption and concluded that health, taste, safety, and environmental protection are the main purchasing motives for organic foods. In Yiridoe et al.'s (2005) review of consumer preference towards organic foods, concern for human health and safety is also identified as a key factor motivating consumers to buy organic foods.

In relation to consumer decision, a large number of studies demonstrated that organic consumption motives have a positive impact on attitudes towards organic foods, which in turn positively influence purchase intention (Honkanen, Verplanken, & Olsen, 2006; Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008; Pino, Peluso, & Guido, 2012). However, in spite of attitudes, factors which can drive a consumer to make efforts based on inherent values and interests about organic foods need to be considered to realize the potential forces for organic buying decision. Accordingly, incorporating the concept of involvement, which is considered as a driver for shaping attitudes and behavioral intention (Laaksonen, 1994), should provide a linkage to explain how consumer motives influence the development of certain behavior. Thøgersen and Ölander (2006) argued that individuals with a positive attitude towards organic foods may restrain from buying since they are not easily change their habits as involvement with foods is too low. This indicates that the importance of involvement on mental processing needs to be applied to organic food consumption (Aertsens, Verbeke, Mondelaers, & Huylenbroeck, 2009). Furthermore, Bezençon and Blili (2010) suggested that future research on organic consumption should include involvement in the organic decision-making processes to better understand its functions and its impact on consumption behavior. While the involvement with the organic purchasing processes remains limited (Krystallis, Vassallo, Chrysosoidis, & Perrea, 2008; Verbeke & Vackier, 2004), research focusing on the mediating effect of involvement on the relationship between organic motives and buying intention is extremely important.

In addition, uncertainty in the context of consumer judgement, decision-making, and choice behavior has been discussed in previous studies (e.g., Chang & Liu, 2008; Urbany, Dickson, & Wilkie, 1989) but seldom listed as a research agenda for organic food consumption (Jager, 2000). Uncertainty can be elaborated as a state of possessing incomplete information regarding a matter (Vieira, 2008) and has been identified negatively affecting consumers' purchase intention (Shiu, Walsh, Hassan, & Shaw, 2011). Previous studies showed that insufficient related information and low knowledge about organic labelling will increase consumers' difficulties to differentiate the credence attributes and standards from that of conventional foods (Janssen & Hamm, 2011; de Magistris & Gracia, 2008). Moreover, uncertainty regarding the true attributes of organic and skepticism about organic labels are recognized harmful to consumer trust and hinder consumers from purchasing organic foods (Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen, 2015; Yiridoe et al., 2005). Taking the current situation in Taiwan as an example, information signaling credence and standards for organic is in a chaotic status, since there are a variety of certification systems and labels, which consumers might not be able to discern without difficulties (Chen, 2007). As such, the potential of asymmetric information and ambiguity would increase consumers' uncertainty and consequently decrease their organic purchase decision (Choe, Park, Chung, & Moon, 2009; Giannakas, 2002; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Given the situational background of the organic food market in Taiwan, there is a need to investigate and understand how perceived uncertainty moderates the effect of purchase intention

related to organic foods.

In light of the aforementioned discussion, the objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to investigate the effects of consumption motives and involvement on organic purchase intention; (2) to examine the mediating effect of involvement on the relationship between organic consumption motives and purchase intention; (3) to examine the moderating effect of uncertainty on the relationship between involvement and organic purchase intention.

2. Theoretical development

In order to select organic consumption motives for the present study, several literature reviews were used to determine the most prominent motives related to organic food consumption. According to Schleenbecker and Hamm's (2013) review summary, health (including food safety), sensory characteristics (such as taste and freshness), and ethical properties (such as environmental protection and animal welfare) are seen to be the most important organic consumption motives. They specified that health aspect is the most prominent motives for organic consumption in Europe, Australia, Asia, and America. The importance of food safety and environmental protection are also identified to be the main reasons for buying organic foods in China (Sirieix, Kledal, & Sulitang, 2011) and Thailand (Tsakiridou, Boutsouki, Zotos, & Mattas, 2008). In addition, several studies reviewed organic marketing research across countries and concluded that consumers most frequently relate health, safety, and environmental protection to organic foods (e.g., Hemmerling et al., 2015; Yiridoe et al., 2005). Based on the review findings and considering Taiwan as an Asian developing organic market similar to China and Thailand, the current study thus considered health consciousness, food safety concern, and ecological motives as the three main organic motives related to organic consumption decision. In the following section, the relationships between the three main organic motives and involvement are discussed first, followed by discussion regarding the relationships between involvement and organic purchase intention, and finally discussion regarding the mediating role of involvement and the moderating role of uncertainty existing in organic food consumption.

2.1. Health consciousness and involvement

Health-conscious consumers can be referred to active participants in their own health care (Gould, 1988). People who care about health are considered proactive participants in health management, and they normally take the initiative to engage themselves in some health behaviors in order to improve or maintain quality of life as well as free from illness (Michaelidou & Hassan, 2010). According to Hill and Lynchehaun (2002), health-conscious consumers perceive that organic foods can improve their health because they tend to believe that organic foods are more nutritious than conventional foods. In addition, organic food consumption has been perceived as a healthier eating habit by organic consumers, but so far there has not been a clear scientific confirmation (Seal & Brandt, 2007). Given that involvement refers to "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests" (Zaichkowsky, 1985), individuals would become more involved if their consumption motive is strongly linked to their inherent values (O'Cass, 2001). Accordingly, it can be postulated that individuals' motive related to health benefits of organic food consumption will trigger their involvement with organic purchase decision, as the health image of organic foods is closely associated with their strong health consciousness. Consequently, this study developed hypothesis H1:

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7306782>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7306782>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)