

# Consumer buying behavior: vegetarian food



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A study on factors that influencing consumer buying behavior toward the purchasing of vegetarian food in Malaysia.

## **1. 0 Introduction**

This research is to study the factors that influence the consumer behavior in purchasing the vegetarian food in Malaysia by determines the different variables.

The vegetarian can be defined as the people whom are refuse to consume the meats and the meat made products. The things that considered as meat are the eschew red meats, poultry, fish, seafood and others. (Yntema & Beard, 1999) The vegetarian food normally is the food which is vegetable, fruit and cereal.

However, for the consumer nowadays, the meat replacement food and the vegetarian organic food has become part of the vegetarian food. The meat replacement food is the food which is the taste and texture is familiar with the meat products and the vegetarian organic food is the food that produced by the organic way which is the way that produce the products is based on healthy and environment safety factors.

In current world now, the community life style is differently from the past time whereby the majority of the community now is more prefer to purchase or consume in the restaurant due to the conveniences. Besides that, the current issue such as global warming issue and healthy issue are also the factors that lead to consumer behavior in purchasing vegetarian food and eating habits.

Malaysia is the county that formed by multi racial country which is Malay, Chinese, Indian and other races. Different race has different culture, life style and the religion. Therefore, the consumer purchasing behavior between the different races is different.

By eating more vegetarian food which is vegetable and more fruits, these can help to prevent diseases. Moreover, the Malaysian Vegetarian Society and others religion society are also introduce the vegetarian info-packed booklet in order to the consumer to consume vegetarian good. The main points in the booklet are focused on the advantages of becoming vegetarian consumer and the advantage of avoiding high cholesterol animal product. (IVU, 1998)

According to vegetarian food consumption survey, there are 59 percent of surveyor believe that the vegetarianism was became more acceptable compared to the meat product consumption. In Northern Ireland, the supply chain of meat replacement products is more sufficient and it can bring the convenience and healthy awareness to the consumers. (McIlveen, Abraham and Armstrong, 1999)

## **1. 1 Problem Statement**

This research is conduct to find the buying behavior on the consumer toward the vegetarian food. There are many factors that can influence the consumer behavior on the purchasing decision. The factors may be able to be good or bad and can bring different influences to the vegetarian food industry. This research will focuses on the factors that lead the Malaysia consumers toward the vegetarian food consumption.

## **1. 2 Research Question**

The research questions that are related to the elements in the study are as follows:

1. What are the factors that influence consumer buying behaviors toward purchasing of vegetarian food?
2. What are the consumer groups that consume vegetarian food in Malaysia?
3. What is the consumer behavior and satisfaction in purchasing vegetarian food?

## **1. 3 Research Objective**

The objectives of the research are as bellows:

1. To identify and review on the theoretical and concept of factors that influence the consumer purchasing behavior toward consumption of the vegetarian food products.
2. To analyze the group of customers those will involved in the purchasing vegetarian food product in Malaysia.
3. To evaluate the behavior of the consumer in purchasing vegetarian food.

## **1. 4 Research Significance:**

1. To contribute further understanding of the consumer purchasing behavior in selecting vegetarian food product.

2. To further contribute by identifying the factors that influencing the consumer purchasing behavior.

3. To contribute information on the effect of the factors that involved in the purchasing behavior.

4. To contribute by analyzing and determining the variables that affect the factors that consumer purchase the vegetarian food in the industry.

## **2. 0Literature Review**

### **2. 1 Definition of Consumer Buying Behavior**

The consumer buying behavior can be defined as the people who purchase the products based on the situational influences, psychological influences and social influences. The elements that included in the influences are including the purchase motive of product, buying attitude, personal lifestyle, family issue, community cultural and others. (William, Pride and Ferrell, 2008)

### **2. 2 The Factors that Influence the Consumer Behavior**

There are many internal and external factors that the vegetarian food industry can be determined in order to understand on the consumer purchasing behavior.

#### **2. 2. 1 The influences of Health Factor on Consumer Buying Behavior**

Recently, there are many diseases such as H1N1 and SARS have spread out through the world and impact the community health life. These avian inflections were come from the animal like chicken, cow and pig. The

diseases that existed had create the consumer awareness in consuming the meat product due to the health problem that created by the diseases. (Lalor, Kennedy and Wall, 2011). Besides that, the percentage of having the health problem such as cancer is higher if the consumer consumes more meat often. (Izmirli and Philips, 2011)

In order to reduce the percentage of health problem among the community, one of the NGO organizations which is the World Health Organization (WHO) had published many recommendations about the human health and the practices. One of the healthy life concepts is less fat consumption concept which is to encourage consumer to eat less fat products and consume healthier food. In reducing and preventing the disease such as high pressure, high cholesterol, the organization also suggests the community to take more vegetarian product such as oats. (Lalor, Kennedy and Wall, 2011)

In Australia, the communities have a good concept on the impact and the quality on the vegetarian food product. They believe that the vegetarian product products are more healthy and good for health. (Lea, Worsley and Crawford, 2005)

In United Kingdom, the existing vegetarian society had also promoted the concept of vegetarian consumption to the community in order to help the people to have a balance and proper diet. By the effort and the concept promoted, the amount of the vegetarian consumers was increased indirectly. (Smart, A. 2004) In the current and future lifestyle, the healthy eating lifestyle will be the important element that driven the consumer buying behavior toward vegetarian food consumption. One of the surveys has be

taken among the young people group and found out that most of the young people starting to have more purchasing vegetarian food product. (Izmirli and Philips, 2011) As a conclusion, the good and caring concept on the health will be the factor that influencing the consumer buying and lead to the vegetarian food product expansion.

(Kim and Chung, 2011)

## **2. 2. 2 Green Marketing Concept in Educating the Consumer**

The environment problem that existed had impact the community life cycle and the awareness on environment problem concept has been out in order to protect the environment. In educating the Malaysia community about the environment protection concept, the government has come out with many green marketing concept such as eco-label, eco brand and environment protection advertisement. With the concept which is provide the information about the green or vegetarian food product, the consumer buying behavior can be changed to more concern on the environment and more consumption in vegetarian product. (Rahbar and Wahid, 2011)

The green marketing concept can help the government to spread out the positive environmental messages to the community and can help in educating the community about the awareness of vegetarian or green product. By using the eco-label concept, the consumers have a clear direction in decision making in selecting the environmentally friendly products such as vegetarian food and a good understanding about the vegetarian food. The trust to the concept can positively help in the consumer

buying behavior and can increase the percentage of consumer in purchasing vegetarian food.

(Rahbar and Wahid, 2011)

To spread out the concept, the best marketing tools is through the advertising. Advertising can help to spread out the concept fast and able to attract the consumer attention to the concept. Indirectly, the consumer buying behavior might change due to the advertisement. By creating more advertisement about the advantage of green or vegetarian product, the awareness will be created automatically and can educate the community to be stay in more healthy life. (Szymona, Quickand Bredbenner, 2011)

### **2. 2. 3 Consumer Culture and Behavior Practice**

There was a survey about the meat consumption and meat avoidance among the university students were carried out in the United Kingdom in order to understand about the students eating culture and behavior practice in choosing food. According to the survey, the percentage of female students consume vegetarian food is 70% higher than male students. (Beardworth and Bryman, 2004) The main reason that the percentage of female consumes vegetarian food is higher because they are more focus on maintaining the healthy life. (Izmirli and Philips, 2011)

In the United States, the data that recorded by the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System had showed that the overweight percentage of males are more than the females. This is because of the female practice to maintain the weight and choose in consuming vegetarian food products. (Divine and Lepisto, 2005) Besides that, the percentage of the consumer

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choosing to consume outside rather than cooking at home is high. The percentage would rise to 41% in America. The analysis has showed that the community life style and culture has changed and it will affect the consumer buying behavior as well. The changes may impact the consumers on concerning in choosing vegetarian food due to the health concern. (Lalor, Kennedy and Wall, 2011)

Moreover, the religious view will also affect the consumer culture and behavior practice. The Engle study that carried out in 1976 stated that the different religious group may change the culture and practice in purchasing product as well as food consumption choices. (Srivastava, 2010) One of the religions that effect the consumer food consumption is Indian religion which is including the Hinduism and Buddhism. The principle of the religion is avoiding from killing the living organism such as human and animals. (Jain, 2011) Most of the people in India are Hindu and the around 85% consider as Hindu. One of the practices that Hindu will do is consume vegetarian food and most of them are vegetarian. This showed that the cultural and religion view will affect the consumer purchasing decision. (Yadav and Kumar, 2006)

## **2. 2. 4 Increasing of Product Price**

There are many factors that can lead to the price of the product increase and this will influence the consumer purchasing behavior. Currently, there are many countries that produce vegetarian product such as fresh vegetables and fruits had faced the natural disaster such as earthquake and floods. Australia, Germany and China are facing such problem and the quantity of vegetarian product is affected. This lead to the price increasing on the

products and the rise is 3.4 percent over a year. Indirectly, the consumer purchasing behavior will base on the product price. (Survivalfarm, 2011)

The economic inflation is also the factor that can bring the price rising in the products and affect the purchasing behavior. There was a highest inflation rate hit Malaysia in 2008 and the hit was 8.5%. The inflation hit had influenced the food price due to the high rate in petroleum price. Indirectly, this will affect the consumer behavior toward the vegetarian industry. (Cpiasia. 2008)

## **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

Feedback

Result

Solution

Processing the Information Collected

Categorize Type of Consumer Behavior

Factors Influencing the Consumer Behavior

Diagram 1.0

The system implication shows that there are six steps involved in order for the vegetarian food industry to target the vegetarian food users. The factors that influencing behaviour of the consumers are the main information's for the industry to come out with the suitable solution for attracting and

retaining the vegetarian users. By getting the feedbacks of the solution, the organization is able to work better in creating ideas in the next plan.

## 2. 4 Hypothesis

There are several possible hypotheses that could occur as a result of the implementation of the factors in determining the consumer behavior and finding solution for the vegetarian food industry.

(A)

Hn: If a successful implementation is made, a good strategy can be produced in order to expand in the vegetarian food industry. This can help organization to have more businesses and more attraction for the consumers. Besides that, the organization also can get the feedbacks from the consumer.

Ha: The implementation did not cause any effects through the factors that affect consumer behavior and no effects were seen on the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation.

(B)

Hn: If a improper implementation is made, this would able to result in loss of profit, time and effort in order to apply the system to create the new strategy in the industry. Besides that, the industry cannot attract the consumers.

Ha: Improper implementation did not cause any affects in the industry and the organization can redesign the system.

(C)

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Hn: If a successful implementation but using the wrong method, losses could occur and the organization cannot work on the consumer behavior to attract consumers.

Ha: A successful implementation but using wrong method may not have any effects in the strategy planning progress.

## **2. 5 Path analysis Result**

The implementation of factors into the strategic planning in order to determining the consumer behavior may have the good effects and can help the organization to achieve a strong competitive advantage.

There may be the chances that the certain negative effects could be happened if the implementation is improper or using the wrong method. However, through a proper or improper or wrong method, there may be chances that no effects and impact to the consumer or organization.

## **3. 0 Research Methodology**

### **3. 1 Research Approach**

#### **3. 1. 1Quantitative Approach**

The main function of this approach is to collect the quantitative data which is more useful for the testing purpose. The data can help in providing the summary of the information and can use to track the trends. Moreover, this approach is more structured data collective and focuses on getting the reliability and validity of measures used. The result that gets from the approach normally is objectively. This approach could be used to solve the research questions and objectives.

### **3. 1. 2 Qualitative Approach**

The main function of the approach is collect qualitative data which is deeper understanding on the information. Moreover, it can use to discovering the information and the values of the data. The qualitative data is the unstructured data collection techniques and needs subjective interpretation. The result that gets normally is subjective. This approach can be used to identify the consumer behavior. (Hair et al, 2007)

### **3. 2 Research design**

There are many research designs may be used to analyze and more understanding on the existing problem. The first design is exploratory research whereby the research can used to find out the concepts, new relationship and consumer patterns. One of the tasks of the research is document or information observation and analysis in order to get the opinions and reports. This design can be used to find out more factors and concepts that influencing consumer behavior in vegetarian industry.

The second design is descriptive research which is designed to retain the data that related to the title characteristics. This research is more structured and most of the existing questions in the objective questions can be done by this research. Data collection can be used in the research in order to collect the opinion of the consumer on purchasing vegetarian food. (Hair et al, 2007)

### **3. 3 Sampling Approach**

The proper selected sample approach can be used in providing the information that is accurate for the organization to use in decision making.

The organization in vegetarian industry is able to calculate with existing error with the sampling approach and can make decisions correctly.

There are few steps in the sampling approach process in order to create the proper approach. The first step is defining the consumer target whereby the organization targeting the consumer that interested or potential consumer in the vegetarian industry. The second step is choosing the suitable sample frame. The organization needs to get the list of elements that related to the target population in the vegetarian industry.

The third step is selecting the sampling method. There are two sampling methods which is probability method and non probability method. In the probability method, the sampling elements are randomly selected by the organization. In non probability method, the sampling elements are selected based on the judgement.

The fourth step is determining the sample size for the research. The sample size can be determined by the population of consumer target. After all the elements in the above steps are confirmed and selected, the organization in vegetarian industry can implement the sampling plan. (Hair et al, 2007)

### **3. 4 Secondary Research**

This research can be done by using the secondary data from the related sources. The secondary data are including the quantitative data and qualitative data whereby can used in the descriptive and explanatory research. There are three categories of the secondary data.

### **3. 4. 1 Documentary Secondary Data**

The documentary secondary data include the non-written materials and written materials. The non-written materials are the pictures, films and organization databases and the written materials are the notices, meeting minutes and administration records.

### **3. 4. 2 Survey Based Secondary Data**

The data that collected is through the survey strategy such as the questionnaires and the data usually are including the people, organizations and households.

### **3. 4. 3 Multiple Source Secondary Data**

The data can be based on the existing documentary and through the survey data. The data might be combination of two data. (Saunders et al, 2007)

### **3. 4. 4 Advantages of Secondary Data**

The first advantage of secondary data is the existing data in the previous research can give the idea and concepts to the researcher. Moreover, the secondary data is less expensive than the primary data.

### **3. 4. 5 Disadvantages of Secondary Data**

The first disadvantage is the data is not designed for the researcher to use. The second disadvantage is the information may be inaccurate. The others disadvantage are the information may outdate and different definition. (Zikmund, 2003)

## **4. 0 Research Ethics**

In conducting the research, the researcher must apply the moral and ethical standard in order to avoid the conflict arise between all parties. The researcher must apply this standard before, during and after the research. (Hair et al, 2007) The research ethic can apply in the related part in this research is the method of formulating and choosing the research topic, designing the research structures, collecting data and the content of the research. (Saunders et al, 2007)

## **5. 0 Limitations**

There are few limitations that affect the research progress in this research. The first limitation is the accuracy of the data may mislead the researcher in wrong data. The researcher may need to use lots of time to find the accurate data. The second limitation is the data in secondary data is not flexible to use. The last limitation is the cost of the research is high due to the material purchase.