



Consumer Food Purchase Intentions: An Empirical Analysis

KEYWORDS

Consumer, food, , subjective norms, behaviour, normative belief, purchase intentions

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to study the influence of subjective norms on food purchase intentions in India. The study is conducted in National Capital Region Delhi, Chandigarh and Varanasi cities in India. The results based on 362 consumer respondents' show that participants felt under social pressure from important referents to eat healthy food. The results reveal that colleagues and friends exert more influence on their food purchase intentions than family members and close relatives while.

INTRODUCTION

Research on food choice behaviour widely uses the theory of planned behaviour as basis for predicting consumers' intentions and behaviour. The three components used in this theory to predict behaviour through intentions are attitude, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control. The subjective norms are determined by normative beliefs and motivation to comply. Normative beliefs are the person's beliefs that specific individual or groups approve or disapprove of performing the behaviour; or these social referents themselves engage or do not engage in it. The important referents include a person's family, friends, colleagues, close relatives depending on the behaviour involved. Several studies have examined the relationship between purchase intentions and purchase behavior for durable goods (Adams 1974, Warshaw 1980). The observed relationship between intentions and purchase is generally positive and significant; however, the strength of the relationship varies from study to study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Consumers' wants are often determined in groups. The inertia caused by the group nature of consumption pattern determination leads to the introduction of new products with similar characteristics to the existing one. Consumers see themselves in a symbiotic relationship with food manufacturers and advertisers

The salient cultural and social beliefs and attitude about food clearly influence fruit and vegetable consumption. It is clear that, if people really believe in the health virtues of particular foods and value the possible outcome of including these foods in their diet, they will endeavour to eat them, sometimes to extravagant degrees (Annie S Anderson, David Marshall, Mike lean and Ann Foster,(1994).

Subjective norms control the behaviour that is instigated by the desire to act as others think you should act. Sometimes, socially worthy acts, e.g. recycling of paper and bottles, bring internally generated feelings of self respect or pride, while failure to act in this way may invoke feelings of shame or self approach. Subjective norms are therefore, internally controlled, it does not operate through external reinforcement such as the overt congratulations or hostility of others. The different referents involved in the subjective norms may be friends, parents, doctors, political parties, religious organisations etc. The subjective norm is a norm that the agent understands of what others think he or she should.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design of the research is exploratory in nature

Objectives

The aim of the study is to provide a better understanding

of consumers' purchase intentions with regard to food products. The specific objectives are;

- To study influence of demographic variables on subjective norms for food.
- To study influence of subjective norms on intention to purchase food

The population of the study comprises of the consumers of food products in Varanasi, National Capital Region and Chandigarh. The non-probability sampling design has been utilised for the study. The consumers were contacted in the respective cities personally near the shopping area on the basis of judgement. A completed sample size of 362 participants has been finalised after omitting 138 uncompleted questionnaires.

The data collected was classified and coded before typing it into MS-Excel spreadsheet. Simple statistical tool i.e. mean, correlation and regression are used for analysis. The reliability measure Cronbach α (Cronbach, Lee J. 1951) ranges for subjective norms range from .652 to .785, thus the overall reliability for the questionnaire is good.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Application of consumer behaviour theories in marketing varies from advertising, product differentiation, packaging, retail availability to effect of external stimuli etc. on consumer behaviour. The effect of these variables on buying decisions of the consumers is studied by Ajzen, Fishbein (1980), who recognise socio-psychological effect on attitude formation. These studies provide a theoretical link between evaluation criterion and the concept of link. These models are able to explain that the anticipated satisfaction with a product is determined by their beliefs that the product fulfils certain functions and that it satisfies some of their needs.

Out of the total sample of three hundred and sixth two, 54.4 percent are male and 45.6 percent are female participants. The age variable is divided into four groups, and 35.1 percent participants are in the age group of 18-28, this group has the larger number of persons. The participants in the age group of 51 years and above are lesser in participation (15.2%) as compared to other age groups. The age group 29-39 years and 40-50 years contribute to 26.5 percent and 23.2 percent participants respectively.

There are four normative referents identified with respect to consuming and purchasing food i.e. family, friends, other close relatives and colleagues. With respect to each of four referents, two items are assessed on normative belief strength and motivation to comply. For example the statement, 'My family thinks that I should eat healthy food' was

rated on seven points bipolar -3 to +3, disapprove-approve, scale and to assess motivation to comply seven point unipolar 1 to 7 Not at all-very much, scale was used on 'my family approval to eat healthy food is important to me'.

The inspection of Table 1 shows that participants felt under social pressure to eat food from important referents i.e. family friends, other close relatives and colleagues, however there is sufficient variability in normative beliefs and motivation to comply to predict intentions and behaviour. The stronger the combination (product) of normative belief and motivation to comply, the more the participants intend to consume healthy food and they are more likely to purchase food.

The overall mean and individual group means are very similar indicating that male and female participants do not differ for subjective norms towards food. The intentions for food also do not change proportionately in male and female groups. The participants of different age groups do not differ much in their subjective norms for food. Thus normative beliefs and motivation to comply with it are not dependant on age levels. The findings also reveal that as age group 18- 28, 29-39, 40-50 and 51 and above changes the subjective norms for food do not change proportionately.

The overall standard deviation for four groups of education is 1.03 indicating that these groups share very similar subjective norms for food. Therefore educational background does not differentiate groups normative beliefs and motivation to comply for food. The group means of four occupational groups are similar and thus all occupational group participants hold similar normative beliefs for food. The linear term is not significant revealing that the changes from one occupational group to another do not change the normative beliefs proportionately.

The model of normative belief structure is able to explain 27 percent of the change in the decision making of a participant by the influence of the referents. The adjusted R square does not vary much from R square, and the R square change is also significant implying that four referents i.e. family, friends, other close relatives and colleagues influence the decision of the participants. The analysis also shows that in case of healthy food colleagues are more influential than friends, family and other close relatives.

The findings reveal that colleagues influence the decisions to consume or not to consume food of the participants more than other referents. Second important variable is the influence of friends on the decision of the participants for food.

The participants feel that there is no need to take approval of family members and close relatives for consuming or not consuming food, as food in is main food of Indians they do not require special permission from these referents. However in the case of colleagues and friends it is necessary to take their approval for eating or not eating food, while dining with them or in their presence to show fellow-feeling with them.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study found predictive utility of the Theory of Planned Behavior in predicting food consumption behaviour in India. Attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behaviour control and intentions to consume food tend to be significant determinants of food consumption as hypothesized. The path coefficients indicate that subjective norms are a significant predictor of intent. In most cases, intentions mirror well future behaviour. The magnitude of effects of subjective norms on BI is greater than that for perceived behaviour control and attitude.

Marketers need to consider the importance of beliefs and subjective norms. Marketers should remain aware of ambivalence in attitudes and perceptions and the need to achieve credibility when elaborating campaign messages. Further research needs to be conducted for specific food products and on other non food products, also there is need to widen the scope of research across societal and geographical areas to generalise the results.

Table. 1. Mean normative belief strength and motivation to comply, and correlation of belief X motivation product with intention to consume food and purchase of food (behaviour).

Normative referents	Belief strength nb	Motivation to comply mc	Correlation	
			nbi mci with intentions	nbi mci with Behaviour
Family	2.03	3.55	.58	.114*
Friend	1.81	1.84	-.061	-.049
Other close relatives	.86	2.25	-.047	-.029
Colleagues	1.45	2.40	-.094	.139**

Note: Normative belief strength scored on -3 to +3 scale and motivation to comply scored on 1 to 7 scale.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: author calculations

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