

UNDERSTANDING THE CONSUMER MOTIVATION OF ORGANIC FOOD: THE CASE OF THAILAND

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Abstract

This research aimed to study the motivation of consumers in an organic food context in Bangkok, Thailand. The study employed quantitative research methodology by using survey questionnaires and 425 were completed by organic food consumers in Bangkok, Thailand.

The majority of the respondents was female with the age of 20 – 29 years old, graduate with Bachelor's degree, working in private company and earns monthly income between 10,000 – 30,000 THB. Vegetables were an organic product that has the highest consumption rate. Line application was found out to be the most popular communication medium use by the respondents. The results also showed that there are differences among demographic groups of the consumers in the areas of motivation and social media perception. Discussions and managerial implications are also provided.

Introduction

Background

In the world that full of pollution, chemical contamination and stress, people are now concern more on their health and being more careful on what to consume. That's why organic food is one of their choices. The demand for organic food has tremendously increased throughout the world recently, as well as in Thailand, which derived from many motives. Thus, an in-depth study of organic food consumer behavior is needed.

A study of Jones, Hill, & Hiller (2001) defined organic food as food that raised, grown, and/or processed without the use of any chemical substances such as fertilizers, pesticide, herbicide and growth hormones. Many of previous research have found that health and food safety are the significant reasons of why people choose to consume organic food instead of conventional food. It contributes to the expansion of organic demand, and brings many consumers searching for food that are healthy and safety (Ueasangkomsate & Santiteerakul, 2016). However, there are few papers focused on the characteristics of motivation of organic food consumption among various demographic groups of consumers in Thailand. So, it is interested to explore more on this topic.

Statement of the problem

From the previous studies about organic food consumption, the demand is increased tremendously all around the world, as well as in Thailand. The main motive is concerning in health

(Makatouni, 2002). Meanwhile, the emergence of social media allows people to be able to communicate with others much easier and faster than before (Chan-Olmsted, Cho, & Lee, 2013). Consumers tend to apply to social media to share their experiences about the products or services they used (Yoon, 2012). So, it is interest to explore more about the relationship between motivation factors and social media in the context of organic food.

Research objective

1. To investigate the characteristics of motivation of organic food consumption
2. To investigate the differences among various demographic groups of consumers in the use of social media
3. To investigate the relationship between demographic factors and social media and motivation factors of in the context of organic food consumption

Literature review

Motivation

Motivation is another key factor of consumer behavior. A research of Uysal & Hagan, (1993) defined motivation as psychological needs and wants of a person's behavior. There are many motives that indicates consumers' decision making in purchasing organic food. Health issue is often rated as the most important factor motivating consumers to buy organic food (Magnusson, Arvola, Hursti, Aberg, & Sjoden, 2003; Cerjak, Mesić, Kopic, Kovačić, & Markovina, 2010), because

of the serious illness that consumers faced and the outbreak of many food related diseases which make consumers having more concerns about what to intake (Hughner, McDonagh, Prothero, Shultz II, & Stanton, 2007). Nevertheless, food safety has also become a significant motive, which help expanded the organic food markets, too (Storstad & Bjørkhaug, 2003).

Thailand's organic market has expanded dramatically in the past decades, and is now climbing up to the upper rank of Asia organic market (UNCTAD, 2004; Willer & Yussefi, 2006). Roitner-Schobesberger, Darnhofer, Somsook, & Vogl (2008) has found out that the major motives for consumers in purchasing organic products are the expected health benefits, the attraction of new and fashionable products and the search for tastier products. The authors also found similarities between Thailand organic consumers and western organic consumers in the sense that they tend to be older, hold an academic degree and have a higher income than those who do not consuming organic food.

Social media

Social media is very popular and is highly spread out among all groups of people recently. The use of these online platforms is increasing day by day (Bansal & Bansal, 2018). Social media is the virtual communication tool where

people use to create, share or exchange information via internet network anywhere and anytime. These online platforms are for interacting, collaborating and sharing of various types of digital contents for example photos, videos, texts, news and opinions with family, friends or other users in online world (Chan-Olmsted, Cho, & Lee, 2013). Social media is the instrument that helps people to interact with others faster, more frequent, and a lot cheaper than in the past. It is also the convenience tool that helps people to keep in touch with each other easier than before as well.

Social media has a major impact toward consumer behavior recently. Rather than sharing experience, opinions and recommendation, people also search for information of a product or service through social media. As mention in Bansal & Bansal, (2018), if people want any information, they can always start to search online to find the relevant information. For this research, social media is one of the most important tools for the information regarding organic food.

Conceptual model

This study is focused on the relationship between demographic factors and social media and motivation factors of consumers in purchasing organic food in Thailand.

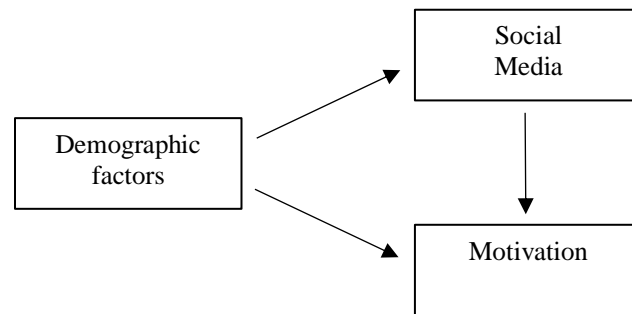


Figure 1 Conceptual model

Research methodology

Research design

The target population of this research is Thai people in Bangkok with the ages above 20 years old, who eat or have tried organic food. The number of Thai people who eat or have tried organic food is unknown, therefore, the sample size is determined by using Yamane (1967) formula. According to this formula, if the population is larger than 100,000, the sample size was 400. Therefore, the sample size of this research is 400 sample.

In this study, the venues of this research are organic food markets around Bangkok. The respondents are drawn

from Thai people with the ages above 20, with experiences in purchasing and consuming the organic food to ensure that they were qualified to answer the questionnaires.

Data collection

From sample size calculation, 400 target respondents were needed. But the case of withdrawal from the study might occur at any time without prior notice or the questionnaire was incomplete filled out, therefore additional 50 copies of questionnaire were required. So, 450 copies of questionnaire were distributed. As a result, 425 copies of questionnaire were used to analyze data in this study.

Data results

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of organic food consumers by gender (n = 425)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	146	34.35
Female	279	65.65
Total	425	100

Table 1 showed the results of respondents' gender. The findings indicate that the respondents were

composed of more female 65.65% (279) than male 34.35% (146).

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of organic food consumers by age (n = 425)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 29 years old	142	33.41
30 – 39 years old	128	30.12
40 – 49 years old	74	17.41
50 years old or above	81	19.06
Total	425	100

In terms of age showed in Table 2, the highest population was aged between 20 – 29 years old which contains 33.41% (142), followed by aged between 30 – 39

years old contains 30.12% (128), aged 50 years old or above contains 19.06% (81), and the smallest group was aged between 40 – 49 years old contains 17.41% (74).

Table 3 Demographic characteristics of organic food consumers by educational level (n = 425)

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
Lower than Bachelor's degree	58	13.65
Bachelor's degree	262	61.65
Higher than Bachelor's degree	105	24.70
Total	425	100

Table 3 showed the results of respondents' education. The percentage of respondents graduated Bachelor's degree is the largest with 61.65% (262),

followed by higher than Bachelor's degree with 24.70% (105), and lower than Bachelor's degree with 13.65% (58).

Table 4 Demographic characteristics of organic food consumers by monthly income (n = 425)

Monthly income	Frequency	Percentage
Under 10,000 THB	51	12.00
10,000 – 30,000 THB	180	42.35
30,001 – 50,000 THB	113	26.59
More than 50,000 THB	81	19.06
Total	425	100

Table 4 showed the results of respondents' monthly income. The majority earned an income between 10,000 – 30,000 THB for 42.35% (180),

followed by 30,001 – 50,000 THB at 26.59% (113), more than 50,000 THB at 19.06% (81), and under 10,000 THB at 12.00% (51).

Table 5 Organic products consumed by the respondents (n = 425)

Organic products consumed	Frequency	Percentage
Vegetable	358	84.2
Fruit	292	68.7
Meat	148	34.8
Egg	153	36.0
Milk	122	28.7
Coffee/Tea	91	21.4
Other	5	1.2

Remark: This question the respondent able to check ☒ more than one choice

For organic products consumed by the respondents showed in Table 5, vegetable has the highest consumption percentage with 84.2% (358). Followed

by fruit 68.7% (292), egg 36.0% (153), meat 34.8% (148), milk 28.7% (122), and coffee/tea 21.4% (91). The least percentage is other with 1.2% (5).

The performance of motivation factors of organic food consumers and social media perception

Table 6 The performance of motivation factors of organic food consumers (n = 425)

Items	Mean	S.D.	Level of agreement
I eat organic food because it is good for health	4.26	0.67	Strongly agree
I eat organic food because it is tasty	3.44	0.87	Agree
I eat organic food because it has good quality	4.21	0.69	Strongly agree
I eat organic food because it looks good	3.26	0.92	Neutral
I eat organic food because there are variety of products to choose	3.30	0.99	Neutral
I eat organic food because my family eat	3.24	1.13	Neutral
I eat organic food because my friends eat	3.10	1.13	Neutral
I eat organic food because I see celebrities eat	2.73	1.17	Neutral
Overall performance of motivation factor	3.46	0.64	Agree

Table 6 showed the level of agreement toward the motivation of organic food consumers. The mean score of the overall performance of motivation factor is 3.46, which indicated that the respondents agreed that they eat organic food because it is good for health, tasty, have good quality, look good, have variety of

products to choose, as well as they see their family, friends, and celebrities eat. The most agreed of motivation factor is “I eat organic food because it is good for health” (mean = 4.26). The least agreed is “I eat organic food because I see celebrities eat” (mean = 2.73).

Table 7 Social media applications use by the respondents (n = 425)

Social media applications use	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	354	83.29
Twitter	146	34.35
Instagram	225	52.94
Line	371	87.29
Youtube	219	51.53
Pantip	74	17.41
Wongnai	33	7.76
Other	6	1.41

Remark: This question the respondent able to check ☒ more than one choice

Table 7 showed the results of Social media applications use by the respondents. The most used social media application of the respondents is Line at 87.29% (371), followed by Facebook at

83.29% (354), Instagram at 52.94% (225), Youtube at 51.53% (219), Twitter at 34.35% (146), Pantip at 17.41% (74), Wongnai at 7.76% (33), and other applications at 1.41% (6).

Table 8 Respondents' social media usage per day (n = 425)

Social media usage per day	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 2 hours / day	44	10.35
2 – 4 hours / day	148	34.82
4 – 6 hours / day	151	35.53
6 – 8 hours / day	55	12.94
8 – 10 hours / day	18	4.24
More than 10 hours / day	9	2.12
Total	425	100

Table 8 showed the results of respondents' social media usage per day. The majority of the respondents spend 4 – 6 hours per day using social media at 35.53% (151), followed by 2 – 4 hours

per day at 34.82% (148), 6 – 8 hours per day at 12.94% (55), less than 2 hours per day at 10.35% (44), 8 – 10 hours per day at 4.24% (18), and more than 10 hours per day at 2.12% (9).

Table 9 The performance of social media factor of organic food consumers (n = 425)

Items	Mean	S.D.	Level of agreement
Social media provides me information about organic food	3.88	0.61	Agree
Information shares through social media is present information	3.67	0.65	Agree
Information shares through social media is creditable	3.41	0.68	Agree
Information shares through social media is information from real organic food consumers	3.45	0.69	Agree
Information shares through social media create positive attitude about organic food	3.91	0.70	Agree
Information shares through social media motivate me to try organic food	3.38	0.74	Neutral
Overall performance of social media factor	3.71	0.49	Agree

Table 9 shows the level of agreement toward the perception of social media of organic food consumers. The mean score of the overall performance of social media factor is 3.71, which indicated that the respondents agreed that social media provides them information about organic food and information share through social media are present, creditable, from real organic food consumers, create

positive attitude about organic food and motivate them to try organic food. The most agreed of social media factor is “Information shares through social media create positive attitude about organic food” (mean = 3.91). The least agreed is “Information shares through social media motivate me to try organic food” (mean = 3.38).

The differences between demographic characteristics, motivational factors and perception of social media

Table 10 The differences between gender, motivational factors and perception of social media (n = 425)

Items	Sex	Mean	S.D.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
I eat organic food because it is good for health	Male	4.16	0.70	-2.228	0.026
	Female	4.32	0.64		
I eat organic food because it is tasty	Male	3.30	0.85	-2.302	0.022
	Female	3.51	0.88		
I eat organic food because it has good quality	Male	4.08	0.74	-2.941	0.003
	Female	4.29	0.65		
I usually share my opinion about organic food through social media	Male	3.18	1.03	-3.053	0.003
	Female	3.49	0.88		

*: Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 10 showed the results of the differences between genders toward motivation on eating organic food and perception of social media. It indicates that there are statistically significant differences that female are more concern about health (mean = 4.32), taste (mean = 3.51) quality (mean = 4.29) and usually share their opinion through social media (mean = 3.49) than male did.

Table 11 The differences among age group, motivational factors and perception of social media (n = 425)

Factors	Age (I)	Age (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.
I eat organic food because it is good for health	50 years or above	20-29 years old	.397*	.091	.000
		30-39 years old	.281*	.093	.016
		40-49 years old	.288*	.105	.039
I eat organic food because it is tasty	50 years or above	20-29 years old	.485*	.120	.000
		30-39 years old	.331*	.122	.041
		40-49 years old	.404*	.094	.000
I eat organic food because it has good quality	50 years or above	20-29 years old	.359*	.095	.001
		30-39 years old	.409	.108	.001
		40-49 years old	.674*	.133	.000
I eat organic food because there are variety of products to choose	50 years or above	20-29 years old	.601	.136	.000
		30-39 years old	.804*	.152	.000
		40-49 years old	.634*	.155	.000
I eat organic food because my family eat	50 years or above	20-29 years old	.520*	.176	.020
		30-39 years old	.252*	.083	.016
		40-49 years old	.332*	.096	.004

*: Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 11 showed the results of the differences between age group. In terms of motivation on eat organic food because it is good for health different from all groups; on eat organic food because it is tasty, the age group of 50 years old or above is different from the group of 20 – 29 years old and the group of 30 – 39 years old; on eat organic food because it has good quality, the age group of 50 years old or above is different from all groups; on eat organic food because there are variety of products to choose, the age group of 50 years old or above is different from the group of 20 – 29 years

old and the group of 30 – 39 years old; on eat organic food because of family, the age group of 50 years old or above is different from all groups; and on social media provides information about organic food, the age group of 50 years old or above is different from the group of 20 – 29 years old and the group of 40 – 49 years old. It can be concluded that the age group of 50 years old or above are more concern about taste, quality, variety of products, their families motivate them to eat and believe that social media provides information about organic food than other age groups.

Table 12 The differences among educational levels, motivational factors and perception of social media (n = 425)

Factors	Education (I)	Education (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.
I eat organic food because it is tasty	Bachelor's degree	Lower than Bachelor's degree	.372*	.126	.010
I eat organic food because there are variety of products to choose	Bachelor's degree	Lower than Bachelor's degree	.487*	.142	.002
I eat organic food because my family eat	Bachelor's degree	Lower than Bachelor's degree	.468*	.162	.012
I eat organic food because my friends eat	Bachelor's degree	Higher than Bachelor's degree	.437*	.128	.002
Information shares through social media motivate me to try organic food	Bachelor's degree	Higher than Bachelor's degree	.215*	.081	.024

*: Significant at $p < 0.05$

Tables 12 showed the results of the differences between educational levels. In terms of motivation on eat organic food because it is tasty, the Bachelor's degree is different from the lower than Bachelor's degree group; on eat organic

food because there are variety of products to choose, the Bachelor's degree is different from the lower than Bachelor's degree group; on eat organic food because of family, the Bachelor's degree is different from the lower than

Bachelor's degree group; on eat organic food because of friends, the Bachelor's degree is different from the higher than Bachelor's degree group; and on information shares through social media motivate to try organic food, the Bachelor's degree is different from the

higher than Bachelor's degree group.. It can be said that the Bachelor's degree group is more concern on taste, variety of products, their family, friends and information shares through social media motivate them to eat than other educational level groups.

Table 13 The difference among monthly income groups and motivation factors (n = 425)

Factors	Monthly income (I)	Monthly income (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.
I eat organic food because it is good for health	More than 50,000 THB	10,000 – 30,000 THB	.234*	.088	.049
I eat organic food because it is tasty	More than 50,000 THB	Under 10,000 THB	.748*	.151	.000
		10,000 – 30,000 THB	.395*	.113	.003
I eat organic food because it has good quality	More than 50,000 THB	Under 10,000 THB	.333*	.121	.038
I eat organic food because there are variety of products to choose	More than 50,000 THB	Under 10,000 THB	.848*	.171	.000
		10,000 – 30,000 THB	.502*	.128	.001
I eat organic food because my family eat	More than 50,000 THB	Under 10,000 THB	.850*	.195	.000
		10,000 – 30,000 THB	.610*	.146	.000

*: Significant at $p < 0.05$

Tables 13 showed the results of the differences between monthly income groups. In term of motivation on eat organic food because it is good for health, the more than 50,000 THB group is different from the 10,000 – 30,000 THB group; on eat organic food because it is tasty, the more than 50,000 THB group is different from the under 10,000 THB group and the 10,000 – 30,000 THB group; on eat organic food because it has good quality, the more than 50,000 THB group is different from the under 10,000 THB group; on eat organic food because

there are variety of products to choose, the more than 50,000 THB group is different from the under 10,000 THB group and the 10,000 – 30,000 THB group; and eat organic food because of family, the more than 50,000 THB group is different from the under 10,000 THB group and the 10,000 – 30,000 THB group. It clearly sees that people with monthly income more than 50,000 THB are more concern on health, taste, quality, variety of products and their family motivate them to eat than other monthly income groups.

Table 14 Regression analysis between motivational factors and perception of social media (n = 425)

Dependent variable	Motivation			
Independent variable	Social media			
R	.458			
R Square	.210			
Adjusted R Square	.208			
Standard error	.567			
F	112.351			
Independent variables	Unstandardized Coefficients <i>b</i>	Standardized Coefficients Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.
(Constant)	1.238		5.863	.000
Social media	.598	.458	10.600	.000

*: Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 14 showed the results of regression analysis between motivational factors and perception of social media. It indicates that this model is good enough to explain the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable. Based on R value (.458), R Square value (.210) and the standardized coefficient (beta) value (.458), social media had a significant impact and influenced on motivation of organic food consumers.

Discussion

According to the results of questionnaire survey, the majority of the respondents was female with 65.65%, which is approximately two third of all the respondents in this research. For age group, the group of age 20 – 29 years old was the largest group of respondents (33.41%). In term of education level, the largest group was the group of respondents with a Bachelor's degree at 61.65%. For occupation, the group of

working for private company was the largest group of the respondents (40.00%). In term of monthly income, the largest group was the group of respondents that had income between 10,000 – 30,000 THB (42.35%). For the organic products consumed by the respondents, vegetable had the highest percentage among all organic products consumption with 84.2%.

In terms of motivation factor, the finding also showed that health plays an important role toward organic food consumption. As mentioned in the questionnaire survey, most of the respondents said “I eat organic food because it is good for health” is their first motive of eating organic food. This result got confirmed by the study of Magnusson et al. (2003) that health is the most important factor motivating consumers to buy organic food.

For social media usage, the majority of the respondents spent 4 – 6 hours a day on accessing to social media. Line had

found out to be the most popular social media application use by consumers. As mentioned in the study of Somtip & Kitikannakorn (2018) that Line application was the social media application that had the highest active monthly users in Thailand. Forwarding information via Line application is fast, easy and information can be sent to a large number of people at the same time by only clicking on the share button which makes it well-liked by consumers. According to the results, it indicates that there were differences between gender, motivational factors and perception of social media. Health is the motive that has the highest concerning rate among female consumers.

On the differences between age group, this current study found the differences in both motivation factors and social media. The study of Hansen (2019) supported the finding of this research that the population of elderly is growing rapidly and the main influence is increased in awareness of being healthy older adults.

On the differences between educational levels, the current research identified the differences in the motivational factors and also in social media usage. This information got confirmed by the study of Cerjak et al., (2010) that respondents with higher education level in Croatia purchase organic food more often than other education level group. Also, respondents with higher education level in Slovenia consider taste is the main motive in consuming organic food.

Our current study identified that the differences in the perception regarding

motivation and social media application and this result also mentioned by Roitner-Schobesberger et al. (2008) that organic food consumers in Bangkok tend to have a higher income with the motive of concerning in health and taste of the products.

A regression analysis was conducted to find the relationship between social media and motivation factors of consumers in purchasing organic food. The result shows that social media had a significant impact toward motivation factors. Similarly with the research of Timothy (2017) that social media triggers the motivation of consumers.

Conclusion and recommendation

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that the majority of respondents were female. Most of them were aged between 20 – 29 years old. Moreover, the respondents with a Bachelor's degree were the largest group of all the respondents. Furthermore, the main occupation group of the respondents was working for private company. Also, most of them earned a monthly income between 10,000 – 30,000 THB. Vegetable is the organic product mostly consumed by the respondents. And Line application was found out to be the most popular social media application use by the respondents.

According to the first objective of this study, the aim was to investigate the

characteristics of motivation of organic food consumption in Bangkok, Thailand. The results of this study showed that health is the most important factor that motivates consumers in purchasing organic food.

The second objective of this study, the aim was to investigate the differences among various demographic groups of consumers. It shows that there are differences among genders, age groups, educational level groups and monthly income groups.

The third objective of this study, the aim was to investigate the relationship between social media and motivation factors of consumers in purchasing organic food. The result shows that social media had a significant impact toward motivation factors.

Management implications

The implications of this study are to assist the practitioners, owners and marketers of organic food businesses as well as other food-related businesses in creating consumers' motivation through social media. So, creating perceived value as good for health and maintaining food quality is important in order to motivate consumers to eat organic food. In addition, the organic food businesses should understand the differences in motivation factors of the demographic factors of the customers, especially gender, income, age and education. Moreover, by sharing information through the right social media applications – Line, Facebook and Instagram, which are the applications

that mostly used by consumers – will get more attention from consumers and will be able to motivate them to eat organic food, too.

Limitations

The limitations of this study were first, this study only use quantitative method by using survey questionnaires. Therefore, the results might not be able to explain the in-depth reasons of the relationship. Secondly, the study is cross-sectional and therefore the results may not yield the long-term implications of the findings. Last, this study only examined the motivational factors and social media perception in organic food context and the results might be different from other non- food businesses.

Recommendations for future research

As this study got all information from the survey data only, therefore, future research should employ additional research methods for example in-depth interviews in order to gain a better understanding of organic food consumer behavior and the relationship between social media and motivation factors.

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