The Effect of Variety Seeking on Willingness to Pay Functional Food

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ABSTRACT

What makes consumer pay willingness to try functional foods? Many studies have discussed on reasons behind it, but rarely take variety seeking on foods and willingness to pay functional foods together. Through combining theory of planned behavior (TPB) and protection motivation theory together, this paper tries to explore the relationship between variety seeking on foods and willingness to pay functional foods and their mediation effects of food choices on health motives and products' nutrition labeling. The moderation effect of external support public health campaigns was also studied. 1

INTRODUCTION

Based on functional foods is defined as foods/drinks added additional ingredients with a specific health-value, consumers are paying more attention on health-related effects on body [1][2][3]. Functional foods market represents an extremely high value (nearly 61 billion US$) in Europe, Japan and the US [4]. Willingness to pay is differ from willingness to accept, it is the maximum price that consumer would to pay to receive goods [5]. What makes consumer pay willingness to try functional foods? Earlier researchers have reported that seven factors of consumers' attitude influence their willingness to use functional foods [6]. Recently, more researchers indicate that health motives on food choice and health claims are particular importance in this market [7][8]. However, little is known about the relationship between variety seeking on foods and willingness to pay functional foods. Functional food is a new raise market in food industry [9],

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and variety seeking expresses the degree of intrinsic desire on consumers' choice of new products [10]. Therefore, it is important for food market to explore the relationship between variety seeking and functional food consumption, and the role of other factors in this field.

This study explores the relationship between variety seeking on foods and willingness to pay functional foods and their mediation effects of food choices on health motives and products' nutrition labeling. In addition, the moderation effect of external support public health campaigns is studied. Moreover, marketing application for food manufactories was also stated.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Consumers' Variety Seeking And Willingness To Pay Functional Foods

Consumers' variety seeking tendency is a major determinant on consumption behavior in food industry, due to it represents consumers' intrinsic desire and motivation for observing food diversity [11]. However, by using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), a study has found that consumers show more preventing intention than behavior when tasting new/novel foods [12]. The most recent researchers have presented and proved that older adult with higher degree of avoiding new foods are less willingness to try, or consume new functional foods [13]. It can explained that consumer has less trustworthy on those novel nutrients ingredients in new functional foods [14]. Moreover, Chinese consumers with higher degree of avoiding new foods have less motivation on acceptance of functional food [15]. In contrast, we hypothesize that,

Figure 1. The conceptual model of this paper.
Hypothesis 1: Consumers' variety seeking is positively related to willingness to pay functional foods.

Customer Variety Seeking, Health Motives On Food Choice, And Willingness To Pay Functional Food

One of the most positive effects of variety seeking on food products is consumers have higher nutrient intake due to their dietary variety seeking [16]. In food choice patterns, consumers who used to seek variety food showed high-quality lifestyle and represent higher health motives on food choice [17].

Based on the protection motivation theory, past researches have shown that consumers' health concern is the most standout factor when purchasing functional foods because their predict intention to obtain health benefit from functional foods[18][19]. In addition, recent research also proposed that consumer with higher health motives reported higher willingness to pay functional foods especially on carrier products [15]. Thus, we hypothesize that,

Hypothesis 2a: Consumers' variety seeking is related to health motives on food choice.

Hypothesis 2b: Health motives on food choice is positively related to willingness to pay functional food.

Hypothesis 2c: Health motives on food choice mediates the relationship between consumers' variety seeking and willingness to pay functional food.

Customers' Variety Seeking, Products' Nutrition Labeling, And Willingness To Buy Functional Food

Nutrition labeling considers as the health information on food products, it is required as health claims by the Food and Drug Administration [20]. A case study of probiotic milk has found that consumer with higher desire in food seeking would attracted by food labels easily, and it has large influence on consumers' purchase decision on functional foods [21]. Moreover, a detail of nutrition information build consumers' trust on a particular product [22]. In order to promote a new launched functional food, nutrition labeling is necessary for both consumers and manufactories. Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 3a: Consumers' variety seeking is related to nutrient labeling on functional foods.

Hypothesis 3b: Nutrient labeling on functional foods is positively related to consumers' willingness to pay.

Hypothesis 3c: Nutrient labeling on functional foods mediates the relationship between consumers' variety seeking and willingness to pay.
Customers' Variety Seeking, Health Motives, Nutrition Labeling, Public Health Campaign And Willingness To Pay Functional Foods

Considering functional foods provide potential health benefit, social community involvement and government health campaigns play important roles in advocating the consumption of functional foods [21][23]. Guidance and regulations implements such as "five-a-day" fruit and vegetable campaign, which encourages consumers' food intake balance as well as increase food intake diversity [24]. Public health campaign also promote consumers' food choice behavior from social marketing aspect such as Chang4Life [25], it would influence a target group gain health benefit from particular products [26]. Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4a: Public health campaign is positively related to consumers' willingness to pay functional food

Hypothesis 4b: Public health campaign moderates the relationship between consumers' variety seeking and willingness to pay functional foods.

Hypothesis 4c: Public health campaign moderates the relationship between health motives on food choice and consumers' willingness to pay functional foods, therefore affects the indirect effect of consumers' variety seeking and willingness to pay functional foods.

Hypothesis 4d: Public health campaign moderates the relationship between nutrient labeling on functional foods and willingness to pay, therefore affects the indirect effect of consumers' variety seeking and willingness to pay functional foods.

MARKETING APPLICATION AND LIMITATIONS

Functional foods as new raise product in food market, consumers' food choice decide whether they have willingness to pay a particular functional food. Therefore, to understand the factors behind consumer food choice is important for functional food marketers. For manufactories, they should pay more attention on products' nutrition labeling and be awareness of food health claims. Nationally speaking, it is also significant to promote such health campaign to innovate functional food market. As discussed above, consumers consumption decision influenced by both product health ingredient itself, and public health campaign.

Although consumers' health concern is the most influential factor on willingness to pay functional foods, there are more reasons behind it. In addition to health motives on food choice and attention to nutrition labeling, more factors such as product's price, cultures in different countries [15], brand reputation and individuals opinion (word of mouth) would also take part behind the effect of variety seeking on willingness to pay functional foods.
THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION AND FUTURE RESEARCH PROSPECTS

This paper gives a theoretical model of the effects of variety seeking on willingness to pay functional food, by using theory of planned behavior (TPB) and protection motivation theory, and how does health motives and nutrition labels mediates the relationship between variety seeking and willingness to pay functional foods. The moderation factors of public health campaign is also discussed. In the future study, researchers should test the above model and fill contribution to this field.

REFERENCES


