CUSTOMERS PERCEPTION OF QUALITY IN PURCHASING FRESH ITEMS FROM RETAIL SHOPS: CASE STUDY IN KELANTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study is in favour finding out the perceptions and experiences of Malaysian consumers in Kelantan in purchasing and consuming fresh meat, fruits and vegetables from different types of retail stores. This paper focuses on the definition of quality in the context of fresh items. A public intercept survey of 103 food shoppers in the Kelantan districts will be utilised. In this article, the results of the consumer survey for Kelantan are presented. Value of purchase play an important role for quality selection in the retail shop. Here "Halal" and "Freshness" play a dominant role. The second perception of quality among the consumers are safe production process, which are hardtop measure with characteristics like produced by environmentally friendly and without endangering the farmers. The third perception of quality among consumers are Imported Products. Here, in assessing the quality, the "country of origin" is counted as credence quality attribute of most importance. The findings of this study will have practical implication for producer, food marketers and the government.

Keywords: Quality preference, Consumer behaviour, purchasing fresh food, Kelantan, Malaysia

Introduction

Recently, much attention has been focused on consumer fresh items shopping behaviour. In developing countries, consumer fresh items shopping behaviour has undergone rapid changes, because of many social and economic factors. Understanding consumers and their shopping behaviour is vital for marketers to develop marketing strategies. Marketing is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon because of interlocking relationships with the various dimensions in society whether economic, political, and social. As a result, marketing outcomes are strongly correlated with consumers (who represent the demand side) and producers (who represent the supply side). Both consumers and producers, in turn, influence and are affected by economic, political and social circumstances and conditions. In addition, marketing systems have also been significant hence policies adaptation is required (Reardon et al., 2009). Food marketing systems have been changing rapidly in the last 30 years. But this change is not the same in all parts of the world. The food marketing system in the developed world altered earlier and faster than the developing world.

Consumers these days seek out good product varieties, quality, availability, freshness and other attributes which create a favorable purchase behavior toward those retailers (Baker, 1990). Hypermarkets as a sub-division of the retail industry are operating in a competitive environment due to the changes in consumer needs. Shopping, in general, is to put pressure on users (Fram and Axelrod, 1990), and Aylott and Mitchell (1998) found that customers have more pressure when shopping for grocery shopping than the other kind. Furthermore, the food industry is bucked by constantly changing as new retail store format (e.g. stores warehouse and bulk sales) is increasing e.g. NSK and Checkers and subsequently managed to attract the market of the traditional format stores. Also act a factor in the study, development of new product categories (e.g. organic / natural) and the development and growth of the involvement of food retailers is relatively new (e.g. Tesco, Jaya Grocer, Aeon and Econsave) was giving more choice to consumers.

It must also be emphasized that in the case of Malaysia, the consumers have been gradually alarmed on the issues of the food safety itself – which involves the matter of Halal certified foods, and also the discerning upraised issue of organic goods. Malaysia has now been a leader in the halal food benchmarking. The United Nations has cited Malaysia as the world's best example of benchmarking of halal food in accordance with the Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted the Codex general guidelines for the use of the term halal in Geneva in 1997. This is because a single halal standard is applied throughout the country with the result that the Malaysian standard has become the basis for the development of the world's halal food industries (SME Annual Report 2006, 2007).

In order to understand these changes some questions must be asked about when, how and why these changes happened to consumers. Hence, the research seek to identify customer's perception quality when purchasing fresh items from retail shops. Research towards customer behavior by emphasizing on purchasing fresh items will be very valuable to both academia and industry players for many significant reasons.

Statement of the Problem

Kelantan is an emerging market that is currently attracting considerable international and local interest. A number of global retailers are planning to enter this market or increase their investments, after the opening of the door to foreign investment in accordance to East Coast Economic Region (ECER) which has attracted investments worth RM72.26 billion as at 2014. In addition, Kelantan has been facing important economic and social changes since the end of the 2000s, the influence of which is reflected at all levels, including patterns of food shopping behaviour. Government policy also changed. Measures were introduced to promote restructuring programs, encourage the private sector to participate seriously in economic life, attract foreign capital and achieve economic growth and stability. To date the achievements have been modest, and participation is less than the desired level, and the continued dominance of public economic institutions is clear. Moreover, the changes in the marketing system are still unclear as well up to now no evidence could be relied upon to analyse the situation.

Even though, one large European retail chain (e.g. Tesco) has a presence in Kelantan, and a large number of modern retail stores have emerged in recent years competing with traditional markets, there is a dearth of research on this topic and it is yet to receive the attention it deserves. Consequently, there is a need to examine consumer fresh items shopping behaviour, addressing this gap in the literature by investigating the specific situation in Kelantan. This study makes an important contribution to the existing literature by extending our knowledge of fresh items shopping behaviour towards Kelantan Darul Naim.

Consumer behaviour towards food is characterized by changing preferences. Among few of the preference that is sought to seek is the perception of quality. The main aim of this study is to explore consumer's perception of quality when purchasing fresh items.

Research Objectives

The key issue of this paper is to understand Kelantan fresh items shopping behaviour. Based on a review of the literature, some specific objectives were identified as follows:

- To anticipate the trend of purchasing fresh items in Kelantan
- To explore the key quality perception of consumer's when purchasing fresh items.

Research Significance

The current study is one of the first empirical studies done on consumers in Kelantan dealing with consumer behaviour in an emerging market taking into account different types of store formats. The vast majority of previous fresh items consumer shopping studies were conducted within a Klang Valley context. Answering the research questions documented in this chapter will help retail managers and consumer researchers interested not only in Kelantan but also in other markets with similar consumer lifestyles, cultural values, and retail market structures. Jamal et al., (2006) reasoned that an understanding of the reasons consumers go shopping is vital for retailer's deliberate marketing activities, segmenting and understanding different consumer groups. Correspondingly, effective communication with different consumer groups can be improved by developing a proper understanding of shopping motives, perceived values, and decision-making styles.

Background In Kelantan

In general, the marketing systems of developing countries have undergone massive change as a consequence of, globalisation and the liberalisation of international trade. Furthermore, the evolution of food retailing systems has been uneven due to variations in domestic economic reforms. A number of questions must be raised about the developments in the marketing system in Kelantan. Given the limited previous research, data sources and information on this domain, the focus of the study and analysis of the situation without a doubt was challenging. On the other hand, studying this emerging development was very interesting and stimulating.

Kelantan is one of the eleven states in Peninsular Malaysia. Its location on the north-east coast of the Peninsular Malaysia leads to an adverse climate in the months of November, December and January duet to the annual monsoon season. The State contains a fertile alluvial plain, ideal for crops such as rice, tobacco, fruits and vegetables. Kelantan covers an area of 15,105 sq. km which is 4.4 percent of the total area of Malaysia and is administratively divided into ten districts: Kota Bharu, Pasir Mas, Tumpat, Pasir Puteh, Bachok, Kuala Krai, Machang, Tanah Merah, Jeli and Gua Musang. (Kelantan Government Website).

As of 2010 the population of Kelantan is 95.2% Muslim, 3.8% Buddhist, 0.3% Christian, 0.2% Hindu, 0.5% follower of other religions or non-religious. (Department of Statistics, 2013). Kelantan's economic activities are primarily centered on agriculture, manufacturing and the agro-industrial sector, as well as tourist industry. Over the years, agriculture has seen its share slowly decreasing, being 43.2 per cent of the economy measured in Growth Domestic Product in 2000 and 29 percent in 2010, with a corresponding increase in manufacturing and industrial activities. In the past decade, however, Kelantan has undergone rapid social and economic restructuring, which has been apparent in the recent uprisings and revolutions in the political. From the 2010 onwards Kelantan government policy shifted to encourage private sector investment and attract foreign capital. Between 2010 and 2013, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew on average by 5.12 per cent per annum (Akaun Negara KDNK Negeri, 2013).

Supermarkets outlets are common in the capital and other large districts like Kota Bharu, Tanah Merah and Pasir Mas. However, hypermarket like Tesco just joined in Kelantan in 2008. Kota Bharu, as the capital district, possess several shopping malls. Social changes are also significant. Distribution channels for fresh items comprise supermarkets or hypermarkets, direct marketing, farmers markets and traditional markets (see Table 1)

Table 1: Marketing channels of fresh items in Kelantan

Market Channels	Shop Names
Supermarkets/hypermarkets	Tesco, Econjaya, Parkson, Pantai Timur
Direct Marketing / Hawkers	Local hawkers, Small scale farmers
Weekly Market/farmers' market	Pasar Siti Khadijah, Pasar Wakah Che Yeh, Pasar Rantau Panjang, Pasar Tok Bali, Pasar Wakaf Aik, Pasar Jelawat, weekly markets in other districts
Traditional Markets	Local shops, cooperative stores,

Overview of the Research Design

Research designs can be explained as the organisation of research activities, including the collection of data, in ways that are most likely to achieve the research aims (Bryman and Bell, 2007). This section describes an overview of the research design which was applied in this thesis in order to address the research's objectives.

The purpose of the research was to investigate the customers' perception of quality which influence Kelantan consumers' fresh items shopping behaviour. In order to answer the research questions, a theoretical framework was formulated from the existing literature. On one hand, having reviewed the literature in the field of consumer behaviour, it was found that extensive work has been conducted, suggesting that this is a mature area. On the other hand, however, little of this work focuses on East Peninsular market and Kelantan context in particular. Therefore, this study will build on existing research by developing a theoretical framework and empirically validating this framework in a particular context, namely Kelantan. For this study, survey has been conducted in Tanah Merah, Pasir Mas and Machang.

The research took place in only one stage, during which exploratory research approach was undertaken. This stage adopted an exploratory research design, collected qualitative data to: clarify problems, elicit information about consumer views regarding the topic at hand, refine questionnaire design and, construct research hypotheses for the following stage.

The empirical part of the study, the research strategy chosen for this study was quantitaive. The quantitative study was conducted in order to get an understanding of Kelantan consumer fresh items shopping behaviour and to check that concepts and survey questions taken from other countries fitted with the Kelantan case.

The main data collection technique was a self-administered questionnaire that was developed for some constructs based on the exploratory interviews along with previous scales found in the literature. Data were collected using a drop-off / pick-up survey method. In order to clarify the questions and the appropriateness of the proposed scales both pretesting and a pilot study were conducted. The sample technique and sample size used in the research were influenced by the unrest in the place of study (Klang Valley) as well as by the availability of the resources (Saunders et al. 2009), consequently, a non-probability sampling method was employed.

One important idea in a research project is the unit of analysis, since this is linked with the strategy for data collection. The unit of analysis is the major entity to be analysed in a particular study. It is the "what" or "who" that is being studied (Babbie, 2011). In social science research, there are several units of analysis that are commonly used, including: individuals, groups, and organizations. Regarding "who" that is being studied, this study investigates the perceptions and experience that affect consumer fresh items shopping behaviour at the household level. Following previous studies, therefore, persons who regularly purchased fresh items and grocery items for themselves and/or their families were identified as the unit of analysis.

Concerning what is being studied, attention was paid to shopping motivations and decision making styles, determinants of store patronage and choice between the two main formats including modern retail format and traditional retail format, and the average percentage of respondents' total spending on fresh fruit and vegetables (FFV), fresh meat and fresh fish, accounted for by different retail formats. These two categories were chosen in the light of the quantitative research findings. The analysis of the data firstly dealt with the description of the data. Then, statistical tests were applied to analyse the data thoroughly taking into account differences in the nature of data and the research objectives. The major technique was factor analysis (exploratory analysis).

Results

This section describes the characteristics of the sample. It first presents the demographic characteristics of the sample and then the shopping profile of respondents, comparing the differences between female and male food shoppers.

Descriptive Statistics

Socio-economic characteristics and demographic variables such as gender, marital status and income have been measured as important factors that influence the pattern of consumer food shopping behavior (Alhemoud, 2008; Gorton et al., 2011). Table 2 detailed the main characteristics of the sample. The socioeconomic -demographic variables considered in this study include: gender, age, marital status, level of education, occupation, race, household size, average expenditure each purchase of fresh items, and level of household income. To address the objectives of the study, it is integral to understand the characteristics of the respective respondents. In line with this, the frequencies test against all demographic variables used in the instrument regarding the general concern of fresh food attributes were undertaken.

Table 2: Respondents' Profile

Variables		Frequency	Per cent (%)
Gender	Male	33	32.0
	Female	70	68.0
Total		103	100.00
Age	18-25	7	6.9
	26-34	12	11.7
	35-44	31	30.4
	45-54	40	39.2
	55-64	6	5.9
	65-above	6	5.9
Total		102	100.00
Marital Status	Single	12	11.7
	Married	83	80.6
	Divorced/Others	8	7.8
Total		103	100.00
Education Level	Primary	7	7.0
	Secondary	17	17.0
	Diploma	14	14.0
	Degree	52	52.0
	Master's and above	10	10.0
Total		100	100.00
Race	Malay	96	93.1
	Chinese	5	4.9
	India	1	1.0
	Others	1	1.0
Total		103	100.00
Average Spending	1-100	82	80.4
	101-200	16	15.6
	201-300	2	2.0
	301-400	2	2.0
Total		102	100.00
Postcode	15800	1	1.0
	16500	1	1.0
	17000	24	23.3
	17050	9	8.7
	17500	1	1.0
	18000	10	9.7
	18500	56	54.4
Total		102	100.00
Household Income	< 1,500	22	21.4
	1,501-3,000	19	18.4
	3,001-4,500	13	12.6
	4,501-6,000	14	13.6
	6,001-7,500	13	12.6
	7,501-9,000	8	7.8
	9001 and above	14	13.6

Total		103	100.00
Occupation	Officer	1	1.0
	Housewife	13	12.6
	Teacher	43	41.7
	Self employed/Businessman	9	8.7
	Student	5	4.9
	Government related	2	1.9
	Pensioner	5	4.9
	Lecturer	4	3.9
	Clerk	7	6.8
	Manager	2	1.9
	Gardener	3	2.9
	Medical Assistant Officer	1	1.0
	Nurse	1	1.0
	Labor	4	3.9
	Fireman	1	1.0
	Police	1	1.0
	Mechanic	1	1.0
Total		103	100.0
Kids Below 18 years old	Yes	77	74.8
	No	26	25.2
Total		103	100.0

As detailed in Table 2, 68.0 per cent of the respondents were females. The majority of them were married (80.6 per cent), while 11.7 per cent were single. Only 8 respondents (7.8 per cent) were divorced. Regarding age, the vast majority of respondents were middle-aged or younger; more than 85 per cent of the respondents were under 54-years of age. The middle aged group tend to be more responsible for family shopping than, for example, older people who usually live in extended families in Kelantan and young people.

As far as the level of education was concerned, 52.0 per cent recorded that the respondents have at least bachelor's degree certificate, followed by 17.0 per cent with at least secondary school education, subsequently followed by the respondents with diploma education recording 14.0 per cent. Another 10.0 per cent of respondents had postgraduate degrees, while only 7.0 per cent respondents have primary school education. Very few respondents (2.91 per cent) did not answer this part.

For this area of study, 93.2 per cent of respondents are Malays, while Chinese respondents recorded 4.9 per cent, and the remaining 1.0 per cent both for Indian and other race. It was recorded that 74.8 per cent of the respondents have kids staying together while the remaining of the respondents do not have kids at home.

According to Table 2, on average spending of each shopping activity conducted, 80.4 per cent spent RM 1 to RM 100, 15.7 per cent spent between RM 101 to RM 200, while 2.0 per cent of the respondents recorded spending between RM 201 to RM 300 and RM 301 to RM 400 respectively.

From the 103 respondents that took part in the research, 21.4 per cent had a combined household income less than RM 1,500 per month, followed by 18.4 per cent with a range of income from RM1,501 – RM 3,000; 13.6 per cent was recorded for both groups of RM 4,501 – RM 6,000 and RM 9,001 and above; another two groups of people receiving between RM 3,001 – RM 4,500 and RM 6,001 – RM 7,500 recorded 12.6 per cent and only 7.8 per cent of respondents had an income approximately equivalent to RM 7,501 – RM 9,000.

In terms of residing area, the vast majority of respondents were living in Machang (54.4 per cent). All remaining respondents are coming from Pasir Mas and Tanah Merah. All respondents have not lived abroad when the survey took place. Finally, considering occupation, the most frequently reported occupation were teachers (41.7 per cent). The second and third largest groups represented in the sample were housewives and businesspeople (12.6 per cent and 8.7 per cent respectively). There were 6.8 per cent respondents who served as clerk. Student and pensioner both accounted for 4.9 per cent and respectively, followed by lecturer and labor (4 per cent respectively). The remaining percentage belonged to other occupations which include officer, government related, manager, gardener, medical assistant officer, nurse, fireman, police and mechanic. As can be seen in Table 2, the sample tends to be somewhat representative of the Kelantan as all respondents were locally residing.

Quality of Fresh Items

Quality is a term with a meaning depending on the background of the person using this term. The term quality is very ambiguous, if not contradictory, when used by different persons or even by the same person in different instances. Accordingly, we will start here with the definition of quality as agreed on by most people working in the area of food quality. The International Organization of Standardization (ISO) supplies us with the most popular and probably the only definition on food quality agreed on by almost all people coming from different backgrounds and working in this area, in politics, industry or sciences, defining quality as: 'the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs' (ISO 8402).

The Criteria in Definition of Quality of Fresh Items

The demand for quality products are determined by different sets of variables. Every consumer perceives quality differently so it is normal to find that one consumer‘s utility would increases as particular quality attribute increases, whereas another consumer‘s utility decreases for the same quality (Kimenju et al., 2008). Demand for products therefore depends on an individual‘s perceived qualities, which are subjective implying the demand is influenced by an individual‘s knowledge and perception of that quality as well as product attributes or characteristics associated with the quality.

Table 3: Criteria in Definition of Quality for Fresh Meat

Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Per cent
Freshness	33	8	4			45	20.45
Halal	14	8	5	1		28	12.73
Price	7	8	5	3		23	10.45
Smell / No smell	9	8	4			21	9.55
Product hygiene	9	6	3	2	1	21	9.55
Quality/Attractive	4	5	3	2	1	15	6.82
Local goods	6	3	1			10	4.55
Still new/not old stock	3	2	2			7	3.18
Free of antibiotic	1	2	1	1	1	6	2.73
Safe to consume		2	3	1		6	2.73
Preservation method	1	1	2	1	1	6	2.73
Color		5				5	2.27
Muslim retailer	2	1	1	1		5	2.27
Size	2	2				4	1.82
Types of item		1	2			3	1.36
Healthy and nutritious		1	1	1		3	1.36
Packaged	2			1		3	1.36
Proximity to home			2		1	3	1.36
External skin		1	1			2	0.91
Delicious		1	1			2	0.91
Bargaining ability			1			1	0.45
Goods produced					1	1	0.45
Total	**93**	**65**	**42**	**14**	**6**	**220**	**100.00**

The important criteria considered by customers in defining quality for fresh meats, in general, arranged in order of importance include (Table 3): (1) freshness (2) halal (3) price (4) smell/no smell & product hygiene (5) quality/attractive (6) local goods (7) not old stock (8) free of antibiotic (9) safe to consume and (10) preservation. Other factors that were not considered as important bargaining ability and goods produced. Table 4 shows the criteria in definition of quality for fresh fruits and vegetables.

Table 4: Criteria in Definition of Quality for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Per cent
Freshness	32	15	2			49	22.07
Price	4	6	9	3		22	9.91
Not damaged	12	6	3			21	9.46
Cleanliness	9	4	1	2		16	7.21
Free of chemicals and preservatives	5	5	4	2		16	7.21
Not smelly	2	7	1			10	4.50
Not rotten	2	4	3			9	4.05

Quality	2	3	1	2	1	9	4.05
Colour	5	2	2			9	4.05
Halal	5	2	1			8	3.60
Types of goods	2	3	2	1		8	3.60
Origin	2	1	3	1	1	8	3.60
Organic	1	3		1	1	6	2.70
Safe to consume		1	3		1	5	2.25
Size		2	2			4	1.80
Local goods	3	1				4	1.80
Will be delicious		3	1			4	1.80
Healthy and nutritious		2		1		3	1.35
Packaged	2	1				3	1.35
Sample	2					2	0.90
Method of preserving		1		1		2	0.90
Can be hold	1				1	2	0.90
Muslim retailer			1			1	0.45
Amount					1	1	0.45
Total	**91**	**72**	**39**	**14**	**6**	**222**	**100.00**

In assessing the important criteria reflected by customers in defining quality for fresh fruits and vegetables, in general, arranged in order of importance include (Table 4.13): (1) freshness (2) price (3) not damaged (4) cleanliness & free of chemicals and preservatives (5) not smelly (6) not rotten, quality & color (7) halal, type of goods & origin (8) organic (9) safe to consume and (10) size, local goods and will be delicious. Other factors that were not considered as important Muslim retailer and amount.

Exploratory Factor Analysis on Definition of Quality of Fresh Items

The respondents were later directed to answer 6-likert scale questions. Below are the analysis of the survey result for this section by using exploratory factor analysis. Inter-correlation of the variables was confirmed by visual inspection of the correlation matrix, Bartlett's test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO) (Hair et al., 2010). Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of some significant correlation at 0.01 levels. The Bartlett test of Sphericity was significant (Chi Square (1711) = 7546.841, Sig = 0.000) as per showed in Table 5.

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		**0.698**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	***Approx. Chi-Square***	677.717
	df	136
	Sig.	0.000

Factors with eigenvalues greater than 0.6 was extracted by applying exploratory factor analysis using principal axis method with Varimax rotation, explaining 65.09 per cent of the total variance. B using EFA, the 26 original variables were reduced to 11 factors. The data reduction rate was 57.7 per cent. Furthermore, by examining the rotated factor matrix, all the factor loadings were considered practically significant. None of the items presented factor loadings of less than 0.6. Also, the factor loadings that are the most widely used approach as evidence for both convergent and discriminant validity demonstrated sufficient validity; the variables within a single factor were highly correlated (convergence) and all variables loaded significantly only on one factor (discrimination). In order to quantify the scale reliabilities of the factors identified, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed; none of the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were lower than the threshold level of 0.60.

Table 6: Factor Analysis of Definition of Quality

Attributes	Factors		
	I	II	III
Factor I: ***Value of Purchase***			
▪ It is guaranteed Halal	**.794**		
▪ I will not feel disappointed consuming the products	**.791**		
▪ It is fresh	**.762**		
Factor II: ***Safe Production Process***			
▪ Produced by environmentally friendly		**.885**	
▪ Produced without endangering the farmers		**.869**	
▪ It's free from pest and diseases		**.635**	
Factor III: ***Imported products***			
▪ Took longer time to prepare			**.823**
▪ Only available from supermarket			**.817**
▪ Will be more expensive			**.790**
▪ It's difficult to be obtained			**.777**
▪ Imported from the Western countries			**.746**
Eigenvalues	1.487	2.394	3.279
Per centage of variance explained	13.51	21.76	29.81
Cumulative varience	13.51	35.27	65.08
Cronbach's alpha	.621	.747	.851
Factor mean	**5.6958**	**5.5243**	**3.6447**

Note: *Factor loadings less than .5 were omitted.*

Factor B with the Eigenvalue 2.394 includes three items that are produced by environmentally friendly, produced without endangering the farmers and it's free from pest and diseases. The Cronbach's alpha for this factor is 0.747. These factors are referred to as safe production process. This factor is the second most agreed definition of quality of fresh produce among consumers. Factor mean for this factor is 5.5243. The third factor has three items with the Eigenvalue of 3.279. Per cent variance value for this factor is 29.81%. Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.851. This factor refers to the rare products. Factor mean for this factor is 3.6447. The respondents then were inquired if there were any difference on quality of fresh items purchased from modern retail store over traditional retail store.

Table 7: Perception in Quality of Modern Retail over Traditional Retail According to Categories

Categories	**Yes**	**Per cent**	**No**	**Per cent**
Fresh meat	86	83.5	17	16.5
Fresh fruits and vegetables	80	77.7	23	22.3
Total	103	100.0	103	100.0

As per survey, when it comes quality in the context of fresh meat (Table 7), 83.5% said there was a difference in terms of quality when they purchase fresh meat from modern retail market than traditional market. 17% said there was no difference in quality wise. On the other hand, for another category, which is the fresh fruits and vegetables, 77.7% said there's a difference in terms of quality when they purchase fresh produce from modern retail market than traditional market, while the remaining 23% said there was no difference in quality wise. The respondents were further asked dichotomous questions to choose either modern retail store or traditional store, according to categories, by selecting which type of store offer the best quality fresh items.

Table 8: Perception of Which Retail Format Offers Better Quality According to Categories

Categories	Modern Retail	Per cent (%)	Traditional Retail	Per cent (%)
Fresh meat	41	39.8	62	60.2
Fresh fruits and vegetables	54	52.4	49	47.6
Total	103	100.0	103	100.0

When the respondents were asked which type of retail offer better quality, either modern or traditional store, for the fresh meat category; 60% agreed that traditional market offered better quality of fresh meat as much compared to modern market (Table 8). However, for fruits and vegetables, 53% agreed that modern market offered better quality of fresh fruits and vegetables as much compared to traditional market.

Discussion

Factor analysis revealed the following as most agreed definition of quality considered in purchasing fresh items. From the data processing, we can observe that there are three factors with eleven analyzed attributes proved to be relevant. From the complete analysis, with regard to quality of fresh items, the value of purchase ranks first and influences more the consumers in selecting the attributes they desired. Attributes that fall into this group are the produce that is guaranteed Halal, respondents will not feel disappointed consuming the produce and produce is fresh. Another major consumer's concern particularly Muslim consumers in Malaysia is halalness of foods. For example, the issue regarding meat products with a questionable halal status is receiving a widely negative publicity from the Malaysian media. This is because a majority of Muslim consumers will not accept meat products that are not certified halal by the Malaysian religious authority. It is possible to note that the consumers at Kelantan themselves to be particularly careful with regard to the Halal sentiment, as per majority of population in Kelantan is Muslim. As regards certification of fresh produce quality, the sample declares its interest in Halal certifications; this result makes us believe that the percentage of consumers who have declared an interest in certification belongs to that segment that is more inclined to be literate in knowing the fresh produce has passed through a Halal slaughtering and elements included in Halal certification. It must also be emphasized that the respondents priorities of the attribute not consuming the produce if they are not satisfy and the produce has to be fresh, showing a clear preference that they want a valuable purchase for each money spent.

As regards to the second definition of quality agreed by the respondents, the respondents chose these attributes; produced by environmentally friendly, produced without endangering the farmers, and the produce is free from pest and diseases. This factor is grouped as safe production process. The researcher underline that the safe production process quality favored by the consumer is represented as the intermediate definition of quality. This concurs with the literatures since the 1990s which have indicated the importance of animal welfare in consumer preferences (Verbeke and Viane, 1999). Harper and Henson (2001) resolutely said that consumers in Western countries were more influenced by the ethical aspects of food production than by their cost, and there was a growing interest in the animal welfare standards associated with production. However, McCarthy et al. (2003) discovered that animal welfare did not significantly affect the attitude toward beef and its consumption in Ireland. Some studies specified that animal welfare were comparatively less important than other attributes, such as animal feeding, origin (Bernués et al., 2003), appearance and price (Davidson et al., 2003).

Meanwhile, for the third definition, the respondents picked out produces took longer time to prepare, only available from supermarket, will be more expensive, it's difficult to be obtained and imported from the Western countries. From this analysis it therefore emerges that from the various attributes that the respondents are actually defining quality they prefer imported produces as well. An element emerging from research regards the attention that the consumer was hoping to pay to the imported country of producer of the consumed fresh produce. This result underlines that the Kelantan's consumer has not been helping with their own territory and their own economy.

Additionally, this consumer quality perception study on imported product were distinguished with studies done by Bellizzi, Kruckeberg, Hamilton, and Martin (1981) and Cunningham, Hardy, and Imperia (1982) who found that national brands are considered as more superior than private label store brands on attributes mostly related to product quality, attractiveness, taste, and labelling.

Similarly, Juhl, Esbjerg, Grunert, Bech-Larsen, and Brunsø (2006) found that store brands are in an unfavourable position compared to national brands independent of category and retail chain brand assortment strategy. Brand assortment strategy here refers to a retail chain's plan dealing with store and national brands.

Policy Recommendation

The study shows that majority of people have higher tendency towards food safety, good facilities and high personal touch. The following interventions are necessary for enhancing all retail shops competitiveness;

1. All foods must be ensured to be food safety-compliant by the authority and the shop itself. Shops must always ensure that all products are all in a well-taken care of in terms of expiry, packaging and also the processing of the produce is safe.
2. Taking into the account that about 90% of Kelantan people are Muslim, and there is a considerable demand for halal food, international modern formats should offer fresh halal products to cater for its Muslim customers and launch a halal own brand in response to demand from the Muslim community.

Suggestions for Further Research

Since this research was concentrated on only three districts of Kelantan, it is important to widen the scope of this study both geographically and sample-wise to allow for generalization of the findings. With great expansion of supermarkets in Kelantan, witnessed by divided loyalty across various supermarkets, it is important to determine why consumers divide their purchases across different supermarkets that apparently stock similar goods.

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