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CONTENTS

Vol. 21, No. 174 - February 2020

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

- ❑ Tatyana Gennadyevna REBRINA, Nikolai Vladimirovich GLUSHAK, Olga Vasilyevna GLUSHAK, Andrei Mikhailovich ANISHCHENKO, Nikita Yuryevich NOVIKOV, *Contradictions and Prospects for the Innovative Policy Development at the National and Regional Levels* 3
- ❑ Lidiya ZELENTSOVA, Alexey TIKHONOV, *A Methodology for Assessing the Innovative Potential of a High-Tech Organization under the Economy Digitalization Impact* 7
- ❑ Vera V. PLOTNIKOVA, Maria S. SHILOVSKAYA, Pavel V. STRUBALIN, Tatiana V. MURAVLEVA, *Connectivity of Information between Annual and Sustainability Reports: Russian Company's Analysis* 14
- ❑ Harjum MUHARAM, Wisnu MAWARDI, Eka HANDRIANI, Siti PURYANDANI, Robiyanto ROBIYANTO, *Corporate Governance Structure and Firm Performance in the Indonesian Capital Market* 22
- ❑ Salman Saddam JASIM, *Impact of Human Resource Management Practices on Enhancing Organizational Performance* 28
- ❑ Tri WIKANINGRUM, Imam GHOZALI, Lutfi NURCHOLIS, WIDODO, Marno NUGROHO, *Strategic Partnership: How Important for Reputation of Small and Medium Enterprise?* 35

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- ❑ Paolo Pietro BIANCONE, Silvana SECINARO, Valerio BRESCIA, Daniel IANNACI, *Redefining the Conceptual Framework for Quality of Care* 40
- ❑ Veronika BUCKĚ, Juozas RUŽEVIČIUS, Raimondas BUCKUS, *Service Quality Management at Lithuanian Healthcare Institutions* 49
- ❑ Lucija Saetovna GATINA, Violetta Vitalievna LEVSHINA, Julia Aleksandrovna BEZRUKIKH, *Prerequisites for Improvement of the Apparatus for Quality Assurance of Housing and Public Services* 56
- ❑ Yevhenii RUDNICHENKO, Lyudmyla KRYMCHAK, Vitalii KUDELSKYI, Nina AVANESOVA, Iryna SOKYRNYK, Nataliia HAVLOVSKA, *Minimization of Risks of the Enterprise Foreign Economic Activity through Improving the Interaction Management Quality with Potential Partners* 61
- ❑ Sergei TITOV, Evgeny NIKULCHEV, Irina BRIKOSHINA, Alexandr SUETIN, *Client Communications and Quality Satisfaction in Project-based Company* 68
- ❑ Oleg Jakovlevich KRAVETS, Irina Nikolaevna KRYUCHKOVA, Vitaly Evgenievitch BOLNOKIN, Denis Igorevich MUTIN, *Optimization of the Forecasting Neural Network Parameters for Quality of Service Management Tasks* 72
- ❑ Olga GORDASHNIKOVA, Nataliya KOCHERJAGINA, Tatyana ODINTSOVA, Yuliya FEDORCHUK, *Methods Toolkit for Estimating the University Ecosystem as an Innovative Form for Upgrading Education Quality* 76
- ❑ Khusei Akhmatovich AKHMATOV, Irina Aleksandrovna ASTRAKHANTSEVA, Anna Sergeevna KUTUZOVA, Liliia Midykhatovna VOTCHEL, Valeriia Vladimirovna VIKULINA, *Harmonization of Banking Business Models with the Needs of the Economy by Encouraging the Exogenous Social Responsibility* 81

- ❑ Isa SAIFUDDIN, Hamid SYAIFUL RIZAL, *A Study of Quality Tools and Techniques in the Context of Industrial Revolution 4.0 in Malaysia. What's New?* 88
- ❑ Marno NUGROHO, Suharnomo SUHARNOMO, Ahyar YUNIAWAN, *An Organizational Performance: The Role of Creative Knowledge Internalization Behavior* 97

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

- ❑ Fedaa Abd Almajid Sabbar ALARAJI, Bakr Ibrahim Mahmood ALJUHISHI, *The Scope of Applicability of the Standard of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) for Sustainability in the Iraqi's Environment* 102
- ❑ Tjokorda Gde RAKA SUKAWATI, I Putu ASTAWA, Parulian SILAEN, *Green Reputation of Hotel Improvement through Green Accounting and Harmonious Culture* 112
- ❑ Darwin LIE, Arfan IKHSAN, JUBI, Hendra HARMAIN, Murni Dahlena NASUTION, *The Effect Environmental Performance, Environmental Disclosure, Firm Size, and Return on Equity on Economic Performance* 118
- ❑ Daniel T H MANURUNG, Andhika Ligar HARDIKA, Dini W. HAPSARI, Ferry CHRISTIAN, *The Affecting Factors of Greenhouse Gases Disclosure* 121

FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT

- ❑ Nataliya VOYTOVYCH, Igor SMOLYNETS, Kateryna HIRNIAK, *The Role of Technology Innovation in Food Systems Transformation* 128
- ❑ Ida Aryati Dyah Purnomo WULAN, Sony Heru PRIYANTO, John J.O.I. IHALAUW, *Model of Herbal Functional Food Adoption* 135

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT

- ❑ Bruno BERNARDI, Lorenzo M. ABENAVOLI, Giovanni FRANCO, Antonio FAZARI, Giuseppe ZIMBALATTI, Souraya BENALIA, *Worker's Metabolic Rate Assessment during Weeding* 139
- ❑ Simona ČINČALOVÁ, *Inequalities in Social Responsibility across Europe Focused on Work-Life Balance* 142
- ❑ Indi DJASTUTI, Mirwan Surya PERDHANA, Susilo Toto RAHARJO, Udin UDIN, *Safety Behavior of Manufacturing Companies in Indonesia* 147
- ❑ Luigi Isaia LECCA, Georgia Libera FINSTAD, Veronica TRAVERSINI, Lucrezia Ginevra LULLI, Barbara GUALCO, Giulio TADDEI, *The Role of Job Support as a Target for the Management of Work-Related Stress: The State of Art* 152

INFORMATION SECURITY MANAGEMENT

- ❑ Narcisa Roxana MOSTEANU, Alessio FACCIA, *Digital systems and New Challenges of Financial Management – FinTech, XBRL, Blockchain and Cryptocurrencies* 159
- ❑ Stanislav LUKÁČ, Daniela MARASOVÁ, Nikoleta MIKUŠOVÁ, Ondrej STOPKA, *Quality Management of Information Systems* 167

Model of Herbal Functional Food Adoption

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Abstract

This research aims to test the relationship between variables in a model that explains factors influencing functional food adoption. Factors influencing functional food adoption are explained by food label, knowledge, experience, trust, reference group, and persuasion. This research uses quantitative design in the form of survey. The population of this research is all consumers who adopt drinks that have a function of curing and preventing diseases originating from herbs. The sampling technique is using non-probability sampling approach with purposive sampling technique. The criteria set for the sample of this study are as follows: (1) consumers who have purchased drinks that have the function of curing and preventing disease originating from herbs with the frequency of 2-5, (2) consumers are the decision makers in purchasing family food or for themselves and their family. Based on the established criteria, it is obtained a sample of 200 respondents. In order to test the model and relationship that is developed in this study, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) that is operated through AMOS program is used. This research result shows that the model has a good value of goodness of fit. This theory explains that individual will be easier to adopt innovation if he already has a prior experience with the product that is going to be adopted. Product knowledge and trust can also influence the innovation adoption. This research result also shows that food label has a positive influence toward knowledge.

Keywords: food adoption; label; knowledge; experience; trust; reference group; persuasion.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon that underlying this research is the increase of consumer's quality needs in the field of healthy drink because of the change of food nutrition concept from satisfying thirst to achieving a healthy life. This increase in needs is formed because of the belief that dietary modification can reduce the risk of prevalence of various diseases. Demand and consumption of product related to maintaining body health are also increasing (Moorman and Matulich, 1993). Functional food has a market segment growth of 10% per year and this growth is higher than the growth of the global market segment of conventional food which is 2-3% per year. Some factors that have a role in the adoption of functional food are nutritional knowledge level, culture, technological acceptance of food development, expectation, sensory characteristic, and price (Freuer *et al.*, 2003). This research explores some factors related to the adoption of herbal functional product. The factors proposed in this study are related to the information on the food label, knowledge, experience, trust, reference group, and persuasion.

The first factor in this research is related to the information on the food label. Over the past two decades, information on the food label is the communication tool that is used to provide information and health needs (Kim *et al.*, 2001). Information on the food label becomes more useful especially in the condition where consumers do not have any access in evaluating the nutritional value of food product. The second factor is related to consumer knowledge of functional food product. Knowledge is a factor that is considered by consumers in evaluating a purchase. Knowledge becomes a rational indicator of purchase.

Knowledge is an important preparation stage in understanding consumers' behavior because of its role in determining information seeking behavior including studying new products (Wood and Lynch, 2002; Sugandini *et al.*, 2018a).

The third factor is related to consumer experience of functional food product. Sugandini *et al.*, (2018b) put experience as moderating variables, which will strengthen or weaken the influence of attitude toward intention. In this research, the influence of consumer experience of product performance will be tested directly toward consumer persuasion of functional food product. The fourth factor that is explored in this research is related to consumer trust of functional food product. The important reason why trust in the adoption of new product needs to be examined extensively is because trust arises as a key element in the success of receiving new products (Kracher *et al.*, 2005). Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra (2002), Chen and Dhillon (2003) stated that trust is an important dimension in the adoption of new product. Trust also can influence the intention and adoption of a new product.

The sixth factor is related to reference group (Merton, 1968). The reference group that is proposed in this research is related to the advice based on customs that have been passed down for generations. The results of preliminary studies shows that in some villages in Indonesia, elders who have strong influence on the group will provide herbs as an encouragement and health for the mother and baby when a woman gives birth. The suggestion to consume herbal medicine will continue when the mother has stopped giving milk to the baby by consuming herbs. This behavior is even sustainable and will be passed down from generation to generation. The advices that require someone to consume herbs are not written. This research is different from

the research that conducted by Lascu and Zinkhan (1999), which stated that the influence of reference group is only limited as informant, but does not have a primary position. The seventh factor is related to persuasion. Persuasion is an important aspect that influences the purchase behavior (Ajzen, 2015). Persuasion places consumers' frame of mind to like or dislike the product (Sugandini *et al.*, 2018b). This research was carried out comprehensively to analyze functional food adoption so that it became a more comprehensive study. The model test that is developed is based on the role-independent variables of information on the food labels, consumer knowledge of functional food, consumer experience, consumers' trust in functional food, reference group, and persuasion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Information on the Food Label and Knowledge

Information on the food label is a communication tool that is used to provide information need and increase consumer knowledge about functional food product (Kim *et al.*, 2001). Information on the food product becomes more useful especially in the condition where consumers do not have any access in evaluating the nutritional value of food product. In general, the information provided includes brands, contents, ingredients, logos to indicate certain claims, health claims, recommended usage, and educative information about healthy eating patterns (Higginson *et al.*, 2002). Information on the food label can reduce the uncertainty faced by consumers (Zarkin and Anderson, 1992); influence perception, preference, expectation before purchase, and evaluation after purchase (Ford *et al.*, 1990) change the attributes that are believed to have vitamin content and benefit in the product to be a search attribute; ensure that consumers get enough information and education about the quality and benefits of a product so that the direction selection of food product can be done appropriately direct consumers to the right choice, and encourage healthy consumption and food production (Chen and Zang, 2016). The propositions proposed in this research are:

Hypothesis 1: Information on the food label has a positive influence toward persuasion.

2.2. Knowledge and Persuasion

Knowledge is an important construct for consumer behavior because it plays a role in information seeking including in learning new products (Wood and Lynch, 2002), and the process of innovation adoption (Moreau *et al.*, 2001). Knowledge or cognitive is a very important field to persuade someone. Knowledge is an understanding accepted by someone of a product, so that product knowledge is believed to be an important factor that determines consumer attitude and decision (Raju, Lonialand Mangold, 1995). Chen and Zang (2016) showed that there is a positive influence of knowledge toward behavior. The study conducted by Alba and Hutchinson (1987) on electronic product also concluded that there is a positive relationship of knowledge toward persuasion and consumer decision.

Hypothesis 2: Knowledge has a positive relationship toward functional food adoption

2.3. Trust and Persuasion

Trust toward functional food product becomes a factor that can influence the formation of attitude on innovative product Zhao *et al.*, (2010). Chen and Zang (2016) stated that trust caused risk reduction from the uncertainty of a behavior. Thatcher *et al.*, (2007) and Alalwan *et al.*, (2015) stated that trust is at risk and uncertainty of a transaction. The important reason why trust in technology is not widely examined is because many researchers assumed that trusted parties have a willingness to control their behavior. Another important reason why trust is

considered important in product adoption is because according to Kracher *et al.*, (2005); Alalwan *et al.*, (2015), trust arises as the key element in the successful use of new product. Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra (2002); Chen and Dhillon (2003) stated that trust is an important dimension in the use of new products.

Hypothesis 3: Trust has a positive influence toward functional food adoption

2.4. Experience and Persuasion

This concept of experience shows that the level of product usage will be high if consumers have experience and trust in the product (Gahtani, 2003). If consumers feel a product does not create confidence in consumer memory, then consumers will not like the new product (Sugandini *et al.*, 2018b). The research conducted by Gahtani (2003), shows that the experience of the use of product has a stronger influence on knowledge, and through consumption experience, consumers build cognitive structures, therefore consumer confidence will increase and the attitude in product acceptance will also increase. Directly, experience influences intention through the desire for consistency and self-perception. Indirectly, experience influences intention through its influence on attitude. Experience can be an input for someone to behave (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1992; Alalwan *et al.*, (2015).

Hypothesis 4: Experience has a positive influence toward persuasion.

2.5. Persuasion and Functional Food Adoption

Persuasion is one of the internal factors that have a strong enough influence on behavior. In general, persuasion and behavior will be aligned, although other psychological factors that bridge are needed (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Ajzen (1991) argued that persuasion is one of the internal factor that is quite strong in its influence on behavior. It also stated that attitude is a tendency to accept or reject something based on the experience and norms it has (evaluative predisposition). Sugandini *et al.*, (2018a) in his study of innovative product placed persuasion as individual variable that is related to intention to behave. Perceptual persuasion for functional food product has an influence toward the innovation adoption of functional food.

Hypothesis 5: Persuasion has a positive influence toward functional food adoption

2.6 Reference Group and Innovation Adoption of Functional Food

Assael (1998) argued that reference group is a strong reason for reference for individuals and it has a high level of interaction. The function of value depiction is rooted in psychoanalytical thinking. According to Greenleaf and Lehmann, (1995), decision making of someone requires advice and input from others (Ajzen, 2015). Consumers rely on input from family members, friends who have bought the product, and salesperson (Sugandini *et al.*, 2018a). The proposition that is proposed in this study is:

Hypothesis 6: Reference group has a positive influence toward the innovation adoption of functional food.

3. Research Method

This research uses quantitative design in the form of survey. The population of this research is all consumers who adopt drinks that have a function of curing and preventing diseases originating from herbals. The sampling technique is using non-probability sampling approach with purposive sampling technique. The criteria set for the sample of this study are as follows: (1) consumers who have purchased drinks that have the function of curing and preventing disease originating from

herbals with the frequency of 2-5; (2) consumers are the decision makers in purchasing family food or for themselves and their family. Based on the established criteria, it is obtained a sample of 200 respondents. In order to test the model and relationship that is developed in this study, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) that is operated through AMOS program is used (Hair *et al.*, 1998)

4. Research Result

4.1. Test Result of Model using SEM

This research uses two step approaches to SEM. The SEM analysis in this research uses Amos Basic. A low chi-square value with the significance level that is less than 0.05 or 0.01 shows the actual input matrix is different with the predicted input matrix. The chi-square value in this research is 21.559 and the significance level is 0.01. The high value of goodness of fit shows that the ability of model to extract empirical data variance is high. The value of GFI = 0.969; CFI = 0.963; RMSEA = 0.084; CMIN/DF = 3.593. This research result shows that functional food adoption model that is developed to explain functional food adoption behavior is already as expected. functional food adoption is significantly influenced by persuasion and reference group. Persuasion influence functional food adoption for 34 percent. It shows that the innovation adoption theory (Rogers, 1995) and Theory of Planned Behavior that become the basis of this study can be supported. According to the innovation adoption theory, innovation adoption is influenced by persuasion. Figure 1 shows the research model after the measurement model analysis that includes validity and reliability for each research variable.

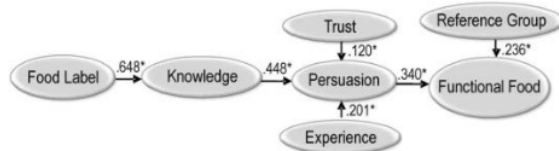


Figure 1. Functional Food Adoption Model
(*significance level at α is 10%)

5. Discussion

Hypothesis 1 that stated that there is an influence of information on the food label toward persuasion is accepted. It shows that if the information on the herbal functional beverage label is accurate, and the contents of the message in the food label and the recommendations for the use of products that are on the label of herbal functional beverage products are getting better, the consumer knowledge of herbal drinks as functional foods will also be better (Kim *et al.*, 2001). Information on the food label is the communication tool to provide information needs and increase consumer knowledge of functional food product. Information on the food label is a useful way to help consumer to decide product choice that align with health purpose. Zarkin and Anderson (1992) showed that food label can reduce the uncertainty faced by consumer, while Ford *et al.* (1990) also argued that information on the food label can influence perception, preference, and expectation before purchase and evaluation after purchase.

Hypothesis 2 which stated that there is an influence of knowledge about functional food toward consumer persuasion is accepted. This research also support the research from Fiske and Jennifer (1994), which stated that knowledge about product attribute is related to demotivating effect, for example someone who already know the brand of a product category will reduce his external information search, because he only needs a little additional information for decision making. Wood and Lynch (2002) showed that knowledge is the most important construct

for consumer behavior because it has a role in information search including learning about new product. Experience-based knowledge refers to the awareness of how the product can be used, and how someone introduces it to consumers (Moreau *et al.*, 2001). Hypothesis 3 which stated that there is an influence of trust of functional food product toward consumer persuasion is accepted. This research finding aligns with the research conducted by Zhao *et al.*, (2010) who stated that trust cause risk reduction and uncertainty of a behavior. Thatcher *et al.*, (2007) also showed that trust is at risk and uncertainty of a transaction. Trust is considered important in the product adoption because according to Kracher *et al.*, (2005), trust arises as the key element of the successful use of new product. Zeithaml *et al.*, (2002); Chen and Dhillon (2003) also stated that trust is an important dimension in the use of new product.

Hypothesis 4 which stated that there is an influence of experience toward consumer persuasion is accepted. This research result support Gahtani, (2003) who stated that the concept of experience shows that a level of product usage will be high if consumer has an experience and trust toward the product. In general, this research result supports the research from Fishbein and Ajzen, (1975) who stated that persuasion is one of the internal factors that have a quite strong influence toward behavior. In general, persuasion and behavior will be aligned, although other psychological factors that bridge are needed which is behavior intention. It shows that when consumer has a positive trust about the consequences of a choice, they will decide to behave according to their belief. Hypothesis 6 which stated that there is an influence of reference group toward functional food adoption is accepted. This research result supports Sugandini *et al.*, (2018b) who stated that consumers seek, express, and confirm themselves through what they have. Here, there is a process of social comparison to understand what is happening in the surrounding environment (Burns and Warren, 1995). This research result also supports the argument from Assael (1998) which stated that reference group is a strong reason for reference for individuals and it has a high level of interaction.

6. Limitation and Future Research Directions

This research only explains the innovation adoption with the setting of herbal drink product. The research result can only be generalized in the products that have the same criteria with herbal drink product and the same respondent criteria that become the sample of this research, which is consumers who have purchased drinks that have the function of curing and preventing diseases originating from herbals both for their families or for themselves. For the future research that is related to the herbal drink product can add some variables that have not been analyzed in this research that are considered to be able to strongly explain about this herbal drink adoption model. Another variable that is need to be added in future research is persuasion (Rogers, 1995). An observe about innovation adoption of herbal functional food that have been done by researcher which found that reference or advice can be a variable that has an influence toward the adoption of herbal functional food is need to be followed up. It is because Indonesia with its culture and customs that prioritize the existence of ancestral advice is highly respected by most of its people and it needs to be considered in consuming products. Persuasion is an important aspect that influence purchase behavior. Consumer trust and evaluation is a picture of the thoughts that consumers adhere to about a product.

Future research also needs to adopt Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in the functional food adoption. TAM, which is firstly introduced by Davis in (1989), is an adaptation of the Theory of Reasoned Action that is specifically made for modeling user acceptance of information system. According to Davis (1989), the main purpose of TAM is to provide a basis for tracing

the influence of external factors on user beliefs, attitudes, and goals. TAM considers that two individual beliefs, which are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, are the main reasons for the adoption behavior of information technology. Thus, it can be understood that the reaction and perception of innovation user will influence their attitude in adoption acceptance. A factor that can influence is user perception of the benefits and ease of use of the innovation as a reasonable action in the context of the use of innovation, so that someone's reason in seeing the benefit and ease of use of the innovation makes the action of this people to adopt innovation.

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