Effect of economic crisis on food consumption behaviour of British Consumers

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to explore how economic crisis affect consumers' food purchasing behaviour in the UK. To achieve this aim, the research focused on determining the consumer confidence about the current and economic conditions and employment in the UK; identifying the current spending habits and confidence about current spending of consumers; exploring how economic recession affected consumers' food buying behaviour and discovering the motivators and patterns of food consumption of UK consumers during the economic crisis. Participants for this study were selected from consumers who live in London and in their selection, convenience sampling was employed. In the collection of data, semi-structured questionnaire was designed and distributed to 75 consumers in the UK and 72 were returned back. The findings of showed that there is no total abandonment in overall shopping habits. Consumers still prefer to consumer meat products, do not change their brand preferences and do not switch to unknown brands. Healthy eating, organic food and environmental-friendly food products are still preferred. Although these findings, this study has some weaknesses which needs consideration; in this sense, the use of non-probability sampling and small sample size are the major weaknesses that can be stated.

1. Introduction

An economic crisis has a significant negative shock to many financial and non-financial firms and consumers and has an effect on macro and micro level economy (Madani, 2009). Some of the major impact of crisis are as follows; cost increase, no change at the wages, lower working hours and unemployment. All the economic crises have many same features, but all the economic crises are different from others (Madani, 2009). In economic crisis, buyers get afraid of being jobless which causes them to feel unconfident which jointly causes empty shopping malls and empty restaurants.
Actually, the reason why the buyers feel insecure is the fear of decreasing job opportunities and less economic activities in this period. Subsequently, during this period, the companies have smaller sources as a result of experiencing interruptions in obtaining payments, feeling under pressure after receiving smaller credits from the banks and so they feel obliged to lower the prices (Ang et al., 2000). Thus, the consumer and company behaviours become different. According to the results of latest researches in this field, during the economic crisis, people do not spend much money as they did before; they only buy certain goods; they do not spend money on luxuries; they purchase according to the prices and certain advantages. Recognising the impact of economic recession urges to examine how consumer behaviour in the UK has changed in their food consumption since food is one of the necessities which cannot be postponed or ignored even though the difficult times.

Research Aim and Objectives

The review of literature showed that the impact of economic crisis on food purchasing behaviour has not been fully explored yet. The literature suggests that crisis-hit consumers change their purchasing behaviour one way or another but there is no certainty about how consumers response to economic crisis. As a result the principle aim of this research is set as to explore the impact of the economic recession on UK consumers' food purchasing behaviour. Accordingly, following objectives are set:

- Identifying the changes in food buying behaviour
- Exploring whether consumers' preferences in regards to band and quality changed or not
- Discovering whether economic crisis reduced consumers' environmental consciousness or not

2. Literature Review

2. 1. Consumer Behaviour

For an enduring period of time, one of the major fields of academic research has been consumer behaviour, which has resulted in several descriptions being brought forward by scholars. Consumer behaviour is defined by Engel et al. (1995) as decision-making and advancing due to the actions of individuals ., consumers experience a significant mental process both prior to and following a purchase, according to this definition.

Solomon (1996) expands this view by also holding to the requirements and demands of the consumers. This approach shows that consumer behaviour is extremely complex, encompassing a broad range of events in consumer behaviour from consumption to the disposing of the product.. Additionally, it not only includes substantial products but also insubstantial products such as services and opinions.

Moreover, Solomon (1996) emphasises the level of decision-making the consumers have to take part in. Consumers encounter an array of stages while choosing services or products. Then it is the awareness of requirement which occurs first at the very beginning of the aforementioned steps.

When consumers become conscious of the requirements, they then start to look for information in order to meet these requirements. The assessment of different options stage follows, while the purchasing phase is next and finally the stage when the consumers appraise their decision after the purchase is completed. The consumer decision making process is the course associated with these stages (Solomon, 1996).

The idea of consumer behaviour developed over a period of time however, and as a result, the concept is now commonly seen as peoples' behaviours while they are consuming goods and services (Blackwell et al., 2001) or buyers' attitudes through which they try to find out whether the goods and services would meet their needs and expectations while shopping, utilising and disposing the goods and services (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004).

As the definitions show, consumer behaviour has become related with the methods of how individuals decide to spend their available resources, including money, effort and time on consumption related items (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004). This complicated web of decisions is determined by several aspects. These aspects include:

- Personal differences like the demographic, psychographics, values and personality; consumer resources, motivation, knowledge, attitudes
- Environmental influences such as culture, social class, family, personal influences, situation
- Psychological processes including processing of information, learning, attitude and behaviour change (Blackwell et al., 2001).

The decision to purchase a product can also be affected by specific motives which include "strong feeling", "urge", "instinct", "desire" or "emotion". These motives create a reaction in individuals which leads to a "decision to buy". Specifically, needs/works/desire/attitudes/preferences are all motivational elements behind "buying" (Baker, 2003). The involvement is known as whether consumers actually experience each stage outlined and the resulting time spent at any one stage, is likely to change in relation to the type of purchase.

Involvement "is a state of motivation, arousal or interest, evoked by a particular stimulus or situation, displaying drive properties", according to Rothschild (1984). When consumers perceive the purchase to be high risk, the consumer will most likely invest more time in the evaluation stages and searching for information. These buying decisions are deemed complex or high involvement decisions (Assael, 1987). In habitual or routine purchases, the decision process will most likely be low involvement or simplistic: no conventional process of information search or evaluation will be taken, leading to the dependence of past experience (Kniveton, 2005).

2. 2. Food Consumption Behaviour

Due to the aims of this research to examine the consumers' response to economic recession within food purchasing, consumer behaviour in this particular product group will be reviewed.

Meal preparation and food shopping can be seen as linked activities because of these groups involvement in the decisions of purchasing. Using the retailer's displays as decision cues, some meals may also be planned while shopping. Hypermarkets have included the roles of the fishmonger, specialist butcher, and greengrocer (Davies, 1997).

The increase in the consumption of convenience foods, the tendency to eat out and one-stop shopping, which involves a consumer purchasing a week's worth of food in one visit, are all trends seen to be in accordance with the increasing workforce of women, whose traditional role included both cooking and shopping (Berry, 1979; Franck and Wheelock, 1988). A complex change in the roles of females and associated attitudes suggest that by now, some 20 years later, the past "modern" viewpoints would have become prominent in Western countries. Modern attitudes refuse the idea that domestic activities are specific to men or women. As a result, men have become more active in household tasks (Qualls, 1981), including cooking (Robinson, 1988), which now tends to be shared (Robinson, 1977; Davies, 1997).

The food selection paradigm developed by Fieldhouse (1996), suggests that several factors influence food consumption such as economic factors, regional diversity, socio-demographic factors and preferences and attitudes.

2. 2. 1. Economic Factors

The interconnection between food consumption and income is shown by the Engel curve which finds that the level of per capita income strongly affects the consumption of food products. Low income consumers generally distribute the majority of their income to food consumption and will most likely spend a large amount of additional income on food, resulting in a significant impact on food consumption at early stages of development (Rask, 1991; Kydd et al., 1997). These fluctuations in food consumption are mostly due to the substitution of higher-order foods for cereals and vegetables.

In higher income consumers, the ratio of income allocated to food consumption falls sharply with income, weakening the effects of income growth on food demand. High income results in the demand of food changing to "convenience and quality factors" including as packaging, advance preparation, and away from home consumption rather than on elevated absolute food consumption (Rask, 1991). Therefore, while food consumption continues to increase, the demand on the resources of raw food production ultimately stabilises at high income rates (Rask and Rask, 2004). This illustrates the inelasticity of income for food demand. (García and Molina, 1995; Gracia and Albisu, 1996; Angulo et al., 1997) which indicates that change in food consumption is negligible when income increases. Consumers typically move towards different kinds of products, such as high-quality items and processed food, although food consumption is balanced. Additionally, food products must compete to share the balanced food budget due to strong substitution among them. This results in the increase of consumption of some products while others diminish in consumption. Some consumers buy more cheap necessary products in an economic recession; however, most of them buy convenience and high quality foods (Gracia and Albisu, 1999).

With the exception of meat and fish, the other products (García and Molina, 1995; Gracia and Albisu, 1996; Angulo et al., 1997) display inelastic price elasticity. This shows that variations in prices do not affect the quantity consumption of the various food products much (Gracia and Albisu, 1999).

2. 2. 2. Regional Diversity

It is suggested that multicultural backgrounds, geographical location, and traditions influence the selection of food. This shows that regional diversity is an important aspect of food consumption influencing production in agriculture and the availability of food products which have formed the differences in habits of eating. Regional diversity which is related to these cultural affects may result in culinary and cuisine customs influencing food consumption (Gracia and Albisu, 1999).

2. 2. 3. Socio-Demographic Factors

Socio-demographic factors are additional influencing factors of food selection and consumption. Population growth and an aging population represent the first factor in this category. Older generations generally continue with traditional food habits. On the other hand, young people have built in new food habits because of new lifestyles (Gracia and Albisu, 1999). There are several demographic variables other than population growth which have greater influence on food consumption patterns. The perception of rural and urban areas, or the relative town size, has impressed differences in the consumption of food. For example, spending on most food products is higher in rural areas with the exception of frozen fruits, canned fruits and vegetables as well as ready to eat meals. Food consumption variations between towns and small villages have stabilised but can still be seen. These variances were a result of educational and cultural factors, differences in food distribution channels, age structure and income levels (Martinez, 1993).

The degree to which food and meat consumption patterns still vary in rural areas and what reasons explain the comparisons were evaluated by Gracia et al. (1998) and Gracia and Albisu (1998). It can be seen that the patterns of food consumption between urban and rural areas are still different primarily because of differences in price while, patterns of meat consumption are not significantly different in regards to economic factors (Gracia and Albisu, 1999). The increasing total number of families with one and two members, as well as smaller households presents a higher per capita consumption of food due to a lack of economies of scale in preparing food. Smaller households also are likely to consume more food away from home. Women in the labour market are influencing the consumption of food in two ways.

The overall household income level increases, and less time is spent cooking (Gracia and Albisu, 1999). Furthermore, food consumption outside of home is more, and convenience food demand increases. Households with working women present food consumption that is 20 per cent less than the average due to more outside consumption of food. Additionally, families with working women consume more dairy products, cakes and cookies, pasta, processed fruits and vegetables and ready to eat meals than families with non-working women (MAPA, 1996; Gracia and Albisu, 1999).

People with minimal education and income had more discrimination when trying new or strange foods, according to the findings of Lowenberg et al. (1979). Higher education results in consumers who, in order to make their food choice, are more capable and prepared to comprehend and

incorporate information from commercial and non-commercial sources. Even so, Meulenberg and Viaene (1998) find that a strong correlation doesn't necessarily exist between food consumption behaviour and education, which challenges the discoveries of Lahteenmaki and Arvola (2001).
Research by Ton Nu et al. (1996) and Saba (2001) show that preferences of taste and food habits relative to gender and age , while Meiselman et al. (1999) finds effects of gender nonexistent in regards to the fundamental desire for food variety in consumers (Verbeke and Lopez, 2005).

2. 2. 4. Preferences and Attitudes

Attitudes and preferences significantly affect the consumption of food and can explain disparity in food behaviour between sections of consumers and countries. Preferences and cultural values, handed down from generations, are having an important effect on food consumption.
According to Gracia and Albisu (1999), the integration of new and convenience products are hindered by tradition. Additionally, eating is seen as a social event that allows people to meet and enjoy food together. Consequently, the majority of consumers acknowledge the social implications of food as more important than the food itself while having a meal with others. Furthermore, attitudes and preferences toward food are influences by the nutritional and health considerations of consumers.

2. 2. 5. Food Availability and Food Choice

The final decision made by consumers relates to food choice and is the greatest indicator to food consumption decisions. This primarily relies on the available food presented to consumers. Food availability is related with all factors previously described but their affect has changed in time. The level of service linked to food products should also be considered as well as the perception consumers have of food products and the entire purchasing event.
The consumption and selection of food is a dynamic process and various aspects influence it like marketing-related, sensorial and psychological aspects according to Guerrero et al. (2000). They suggest that among these aspects, the sensorial aspect is believed to be the most important element explaining consumers' choice, even though the role of attitudes, price, and product information in the process of consumer choice is undeniable. The most commonly used source of information is the brand name according to the studies (Guerrero, 1995). This is due to the utilisation of the brand for identifying the goods and their main features, for the purposes of guarantee, personalisation and evaluation purposes (Guerrero et al., 2000).
The fact that the influence of a brand name is mostly caused by the characteristics of individuals was determined in several studies.

In this context, Cardello (1997), Cardello et al. (1996) and Cheng et al. (1990) Keown and Casey (1995) and Guerrero (1995) argue that the brand name's effect is closely associated with the product as well as the background and cultural of the customer. For example, Keown and Casey (1995) found that Irish consumers select wines based on the brand name.
Additionally, a study conducted by Guerrero (1995) revealed that careful attention was given to brand names of olive oil when purchased by Spanish consumers from the Catalan district. Several studies have show, however, in terms of food; similar relationships for both influence of cultural background and the effect of brand names on consumption of food do not exist. For example, Vickers (1993) finds little influence in the intent to buy intention strawberry yogurt due to brand names. The study of McEwan (1994) showed that the brand name is the least important aspect in the purchase intentions of British consumers.

2. 3. Food Consumption Motivators

Today we live in a consumer based society and consumerism is essential. Consumers and consumption are essential to socio-cultural and economic life. The establishment of the food market from product driven towards consumer driven is not an independent issue but part of the current growing consumer society (Dagevos, 2005).

Verdict conducted a study in 2008 which revealed that many consumers now anticipate food they purchase to have a level of practicality integrated although there was a decline in practicality expectations over the years.. Their research showed that the number of home meals eaten that included six or more items is increasing; this suggested that consumers are more inclined to cook meals from raw ingredients. The research also illustrated that fish and red meat display the most substantial growth in households that include children and include evening meals.

Verdict (2008) showed in a report that potential enjoyment of food has surpassed practicality as the most influential motivator for consumption, by evidence of consumers indicating this as the main reason for selection.

Another fascinating discovery is that consumers are becoming more familiar with the phrases ‘food miles’ and ‘carbon footprint’ Consumers are more and more concerned with environmental effects and how their food is produced. In this sense, an increase in organic food consumption has been seen (Verdict, 2008). It is suggested that primary cause is the increase of the ‘feel-good factor’ due to the perception of the products being healthier and environmentally friendly; therefore there is usually an cross between the motivations for buying foods with a assumed health benefit and those seen as luxury (Richardson, 2008).

The consumer research organised in the food consumption review shows that a change in the motivators can be seen since 1995 where health issues, enjoyment, and luxury consumption represent the top motivators. Since economics influences the buying behaviour of consumers, the issue of how consumer food consumption has been affected by the economic crisis needs to be analysed. This is determined in the next section.

2. 4. Consumer Behaviour during Crisis

Factors which affect consumer decision making include individual differences, environmental influences and psychological process. Not only do these factors affect the decision making process when making purchases but also form behaviour. The economic crisis, which psychologically and financially affected consumers, is one of these factors that have changed consumer behaviour. According to texts, consumer confidence changes due to purely economic issues and that consumer confidence normally carries a balanced relationship with just a few variables. This results in consumer attitude usually being only a reflection of economic difficulty or prosperity reinforcing rather than beginning business cycles.

In psychological economics, the result of a household’s change in income or prosperity is dependent upon the attitudes at the time. Therefore, consumer spending does not just depend on an ability to buy but also depends on a willingness to buy (Katona, 1975; Throop, 1992).

There are three main analyses on consumer sentiment emerging in the texts (Strumpel et al., 1972). The first of these is the original view of Katona. Sentiment is an important indicator in this view, along with income, and spending on elective goods such as consumer durables.

Sentiment primarily gauges optimism or pessimism about economic conditions of the future represents the second view (Tobin, 1959; Strumpel et al., 1972). Overall consumption and saving theories emphasise economic agents’ view of the current environment and future expectations. So, in “life-cycle” or “permanent income” consumption theories, current spending on services and nondurables, as well as on durables, relies heavily on expected future income (Throop, 1992).

To put it another way, the permanent income and life-cycle hypotheses suggests that decisions of consumers rely on their future incomes' expectations. When consumers are optimistic about the future they consume more and save less, than when they are pessimistic (Fan and Wong, 1998). This is because, "consumers form estimates of their ability to consume in the long term and then set current consumption to the appropriate fraction of that estimates and these estimates are generally stated in the form of wealth" (Hall, 1978).

The third view states that risk or uncertainty is the motivator of consumer confidence. This is due to the fact that consumer spending is affected strongly by the probability of job loss and/or severe income loss and therefore causes financial distress (Juster and Watchel, 1972; Mishkin, 1976; Throop, 1992). Although the likelihood of losing a job or experiencing severe income loss is related to the existing or expected conditions of the economy, its influence on consumer spending happens in various ways. According to Throop (1992), if there is a high probability, the response of the household is to save in a liquid form rather than illiquid to deal with future income shortages. By this, the most preferred action delaying spending on consumer durables (Throop, 1992).

Buying behaviour in consumers varies related to their expectations regarding lay-offs and rising interest rates, according to the most recent studies (Sharma, 1981). The conclusions of the analysis indicate that consumers purchase less; they made selected products purchases; luxuries were typically postponed; decision-making is mostly price-based and the main drivers of purchases are specific benefits. Results of the study performed by Ang et al. (2000) show that in an economic recession Asian consumers displayed reactions and made several changes including the following:

- General reactions reflect that consumers prefer to decrease the rate of consumption avoid wasting and become more careful while making decisions and try to obtain more information.
- Another attitude of the consumer is related to product adjustments, which is buying only the necessary goods, especially the cheaper, generic and local products in smaller sizes.
- By paying attention to the price adjustments people prefer the goods which are more durable but cheaper.
- Another reaction of the consumers is related to promotion adjustments. This means that consumers display more rational attitudes while shopping. For instance they are not attracted by the free gifts and imagery-based promotion campaigns.
- Lastly, during the crises time consumers also adjust their shopping attitudes i.e. they try to do shopping when the prices are discounted in the shopping centers, which are in the vicinity (Ang et al., 2000).

The review of text indicates that food consumption behaviour is analysed thoroughly but; the affect of the economic crisis in regards to food purchasing behaviour has not been fully examined yet. The literature suggests that consumers change their purchasing behaviour one way or another when affected by the crisis but the variations in purchasing intentions relates to their cultural backgrounds. Identifying this suggests analysing UK food purchasing behaviour of consumers while experiencing an economic crisis. Accordingly in the following part methodology of this study is presented.

3. Research Methodology

The aim of this study was to explore the impact of the economic recession on UK consumers' food purchasing behaviour. Accomplishing this aim required carrying out a research through methodically gathering data and analysing them in order to discover the research problem under investigation.

For this research questionnaire techniques was utilised however, in order to obtained both qualitative and quantitative data, the questionnaire was designed in the semi-structured way of which allow asking both closed and open-ended questions. By using this technique, the researcher was able to collect opinion of consumers as well as in conducting statistical analysis. In collecting opinion of consumers regarding the impact of economic crisis on their food shopping behaviour, several techniques were used. These were ranking, likert scales and attitude statements. In ranking, it was asked respondents to rank items in order of importance. In Likert scales, it was asked respondents to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a proposition or the importance they attach to a factor, using a standard set of responses. This technique allows comparison of opinions of different groups (Veal, 2006). By employing these techniques, it is believed that whole picture in changing food buying behaviour of consumer could be obtained. The population included all consumers in the UK. The sample from the population was drawn by targeting consumers who live in London due to easy access to the consumers in this city. In the selection of sample, convenience sampling is employed. As food falls into basic needs of human beings, everybody shop for food. Therefore no classification was made in selecting samples. In addition to this, no particular retailer brand was chosen because; it was suggested in the literature review of this study that consumers tend to consider economic factors when purchasing food in economic recessions. This may include switching to cheaper retailers. In order to identify whether economic recession causes such changes in food consumption, it was essential to select participants from a wider group without limiting the selection process by a particular retailer. Accordingly, the sample size was determined as 75 from the population. In accord to this determination, 75 questionnaires were distributed to the consumers who are chosen by using convenient sampling which is one of the ways of non-probability sampling which allows researcher to choose sample conveniently (Saunders et al., 2007) but 72 questionnaires were collected from the sample size. In the analysis of data, both statistical methods and interpretive techniques were used. To conduct statistical analysis, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is used. In this context, frequency analysis is conducted to questions that are designed as close-ended. For the analysis of text information collected via open-ended question, first teaming was employed. Findings that were relevant to the research were coded to transform them into quantitative data.

4. Analysis

4. 1. Part 1 - Demographic Characteristics of Participants

As stated above, the question asked in this section aimed to obtain data about demographic characteristics of participants by asking gender, age, marital status, occupation, employment status, gross annual income and ethnic background. The results are shown below.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	24	33.3	33.3	33.3
Female	48	66.7	66.7	100
Age				
Less than 18	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
18-25	29	40.3	40.3	41.7
25-34	25	34.7	34.7	76.4
35-44	8	11.1	11.1	87.5
45-54	6	8.3	8.3	95.8
55-64	2	2.8	2.8	98.6
65 and More	1	1.4	1.4	100
Marital Status				
Not Stated	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
Single	48	66.7	66.7	68.1
Married with No Children	8	11.1	11.1	79.2
Married with Children	15	20.8	20.8	100
Occupation				
Manager or Senior Officials	17	23.6	23.6	23.6
Professional Occupation	22	30.6	30.6	54.2
Skilled Trades Occupation	1	1.4	1.4	55.6
Administrative and/or Secretarial Occupation	6	8.3	8.3	63.9
Sales and Customer Service Occupation	2	2.8	2.8	66.7
Elementary Occupation	1	1.4	1.4	68.1
Student	21	29.2	29.2	97.2
Pensioner/Unemployed	2	2.8	2.8	100
Employment Status				
Not Stated	7	9.7	9.7	9.7
Full-Time	47	65.3	65.3	75
Part-Time	18	25	25	100
Gross Annual Income				
Not Stated	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
Less than £10,000	17	23.6	23.6	25
£10,000-£14,999	6	8.3	8.3	33.3
£15,000-£24,999	16	22.2	22.2	55.6
£25,000-£34,999	11	15.3	15.3	70.8
£35,000-£49,999	15	20.8	20.8	91.7
£50,000 and Over	6	8.3	8.3	100
Ethnic Background				
White	42	58.3	58.3	58.3
Mediterranean or Hispanic Person	19	26.4	26.4	84.7
African/Caribbean	2	2.8	2.8	87.5
South Asian	3	4.2	4.2	91.7
South-East Asian	3	4.2	4.2	95.8
Arabic, Egyptian, Maghrebi and others	3	4.2	4.2	100

Table 1 shows the percentile distribution of participants according to their demographic characteristics. The findings suggests that majority of the participants were female; their age was between 18 and 34; they were single; mostly professionals and students and work full-time.

In terms of income, participants from three different income groups – lower income, middle income and higher income were captured. In terms of ethnic background, most participants stated that they are white.

4. 2. Part 2 – Effects of Economic Crisis on Food Buying Behaviour

4. 2. 1. Changes in Food Buying Habits

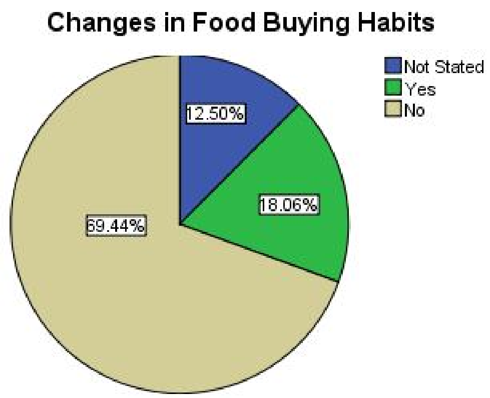
Table 2: Changes in Food Buying Habits

Changes in Food Buying Habits

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	9	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Yes	13	18.1	18.1	30.6
	No	50	69.4	69.4	100
	Total	72	100	100	

As can be seen in the table 2, when asked if the economic crisis caused any changes in food buying habits, an overwhelming number of the participants responded "no". This group represents 69% or 50 of the 72 surveyed. Those who responded "yes" constitute 13 of the 72 or 18% of the total population in the questionnaire. Those who did not respond represented 13% of the population surveyed.

Pie Chart 1: Changes in Food Buying Habits



When asked for the reason of why the economic crisis had affected the participants buying habits, a majority of the responses indicated the belief that food was a necessity, and therefore no change was necessary. Some of the participants responded that the food prices were the same, while some indicated that it had risen since the crisis. Some of the participants indicated they were eating out less to save money, and some participants responded that buying healthy food was necessary regardless of the economic conditions.

4. 2. 2. Food Consumption Patterns in Economic Crisis

4. 2. 2. 1. I have been buying less red meat due to economic crisis

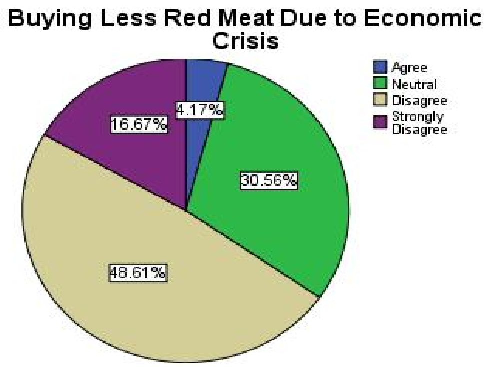
Table 3: Buying Less Red Meat Due to Economic Crisis

Buying Less Red Meat Due to Economic Crisis

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	3	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Neutral	22	30.6	30.6	34.7
	Disagree	35	48.6	48.6	83.3
	Strongly Disagree	12	16.7	16.7	100
	Total	72	100	100	

According to the table, 4% or 3 of the 72 participants agreed to buy less red meat, while respondents that had a neutral response towards whether they bought red meat was 31% or 22 of the 72 participants. 49% or 35 of the 72 surveyed disagreed that they bought less red meat, and 17% or 12 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed to buying less red meat.

Pie Chart 2: Buying Less Red Meat Due to Economic Crisis



4. 2. 2. 2. I have been buying less poultry meat due to economic crisis

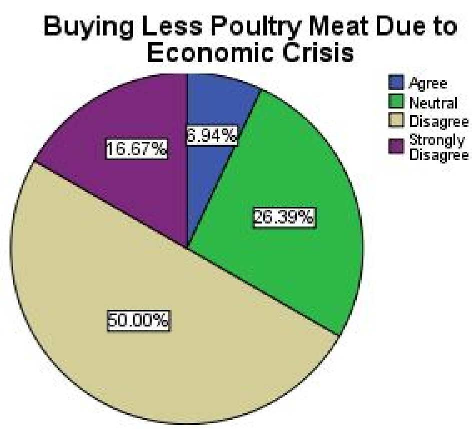
Table 4: Buying Less Poultry Meat Due to Economic Crisis

Buying Less Poultry Meat Due to Economic Crisis

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	5	6.9	6.9	6.9
	Neutral	19	26.4	26.4	33.3
	Disagree	36	50	50	83.3
	Strongly Disagree	12	16.7	16.7	100
	Total	72	100	100	

According to the table, 7% or 5 of the 72 participants agreed with buying less poultry due to the economic crisis, while respondents that had a neutral response towards whether they bought poultry was 26% or 19 of the 72 participants. 50% or 36 of the 72 surveyed disagreed that they bought less poultry, and 17% or 12 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed to buying less poultry due to the economic crisis.

Pie Chart 3: Buying Less Poultry Meat Due to Economic Crisis



4. 2. 2. 3. I started to dine in rather than eating out due to economic

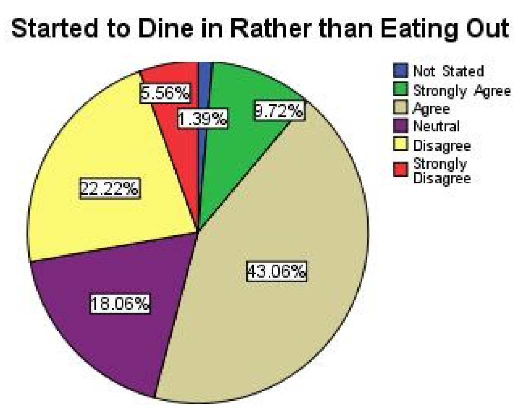
Table 5: Started to Dine in Rather than Eating Out

Started to Dine in Rather than Eating Out

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Strongly Agree	7	9.7	9.7	11.1
	Agree	31	43.1	43.1	54.2
	Neutral	13	18.1	18.1	72.2
	Disagree	16	22.2	22.2	94.4
	Strongly Disagree	4	5.6	5.6	100
	Total	72	100	100	

According to the table, 10% or 7 of the 72 participants strongly agreed with dining in rather than eating out, while respondents that agreed to dining in rather than eating out was 43% or 31 of the 72 participants. 18% of respondents were neutral and 22% or 16 of the 72 surveyed disagreed that they dined in rather than ate out. 6% or 4 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed to dining in rather than eating out due to the economic crisis. 1 participant did not respond to this question.

Pie Chart 4: Started to Dine in Rather than Eating Out



4. 2. 2. 4. If I need to eat out, I prefer fast-food retailers such as McDonalds

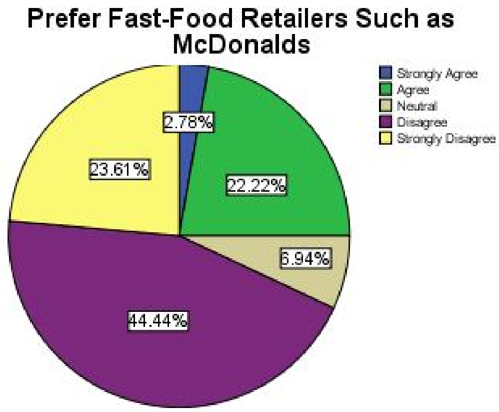
Table 6: Preferring Fast-Food Retailers Such as McDonalds

Prefer Fast-Food Retailers Such as McDonalds

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	2	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Agree	16	22.2	22.2	25
	Neutral	5	6.9	6.9	31.9
	Disagree	32	44.4	44.4	76.4
	Strongly Disagree	17	23.6	23.6	100
	Total	72	100	100	

The table shows that, 3% or 2 of the 72 participants strongly agreed to preferring fast food retailers, while respondents that agreed to preferring fast food retailers was 22% or 16 of the 72 participants. 7% of respondents were neutral and 44% or 32 of the 72 participants surveyed disagreed to preferring fast foods retailers. 24% or 17 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed to dining now preferring fast food retailers.

Pie Chart 5: Preferring Fast-Food Retailers Such as McDonalds



4. 2. 2. 5. I started to prefer ready meals rather than cooking because it is cheaper

Table 7: Preferring Ready Meals Rather than Cooking

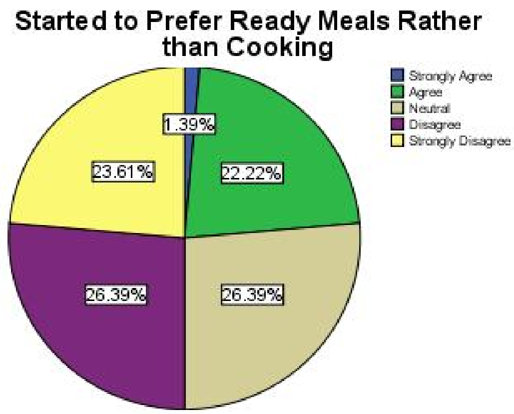
Started to Prefer Ready Meals Rather than Cooking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Agree	16	22.2	22.2	23.6
	Neutral	19	26.4	26.4	50
	Disagree	19	26.4	26.4	76.4
	Strongly Disagree	17	23.6	23.6	100
	Total	72	100	100	

The table shows that, 1% or 1 of the 72 participants strongly agreed to preferring ready meals rather than cooking, while respondents that agreed with preferring ready meals rather than cooking was 22% or 16 of the 72 participants. 26% of respondents were neutral and 26% or 19 of the 72 participants surveyed disagreed to preferring ready meals rather than cooking.

24% or 17 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed with preferring ready meals rather than cooking. The data indicates a relatively balanced distribution of agreement among all categories.

Pie Chart 6: Preferring Ready Meals Rather than Cooking



4. 2. 2. 6. I still try to eat a balanced diet despite the economic crisis

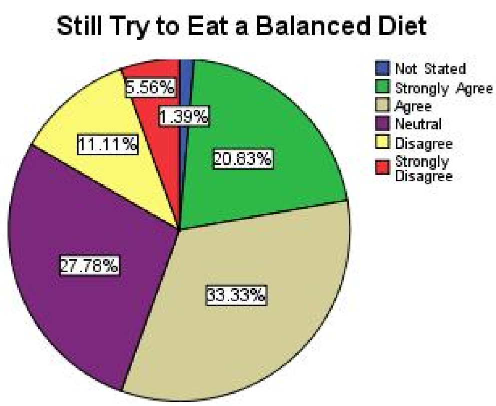
Table 8: Still Try to Eat a Balanced Diet

Still Try to Eat a Balanced Diet

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Strongly Agree	15	20.8	20.8	22.2
	Agree	24	33.3	33.3	55.6
	Neutral	20	27.8	27.8	83.3
	Disagree	8	11.1	11.1	94.4
	Strongly Disagree	4	5.6	5.6	100
	Total	72	100	100	

It can be seen that, 21% or 15 of the 72 participants strongly agreed with trying to eat a balanced diet, while respondents that agreed with trying to eat a balanced diet was 33% or 24 of the 72 participants. 28% of respondents were neutral and 11% or 8 of the 72 participants surveyed disagreed to trying to eat a balanced diet. 6% or 4 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed with trying to eat a balanced diet. 1% or 1 of the participants in this survey did not respond.

Pie Chart 7: Still Try to Eat a Balanced Diet



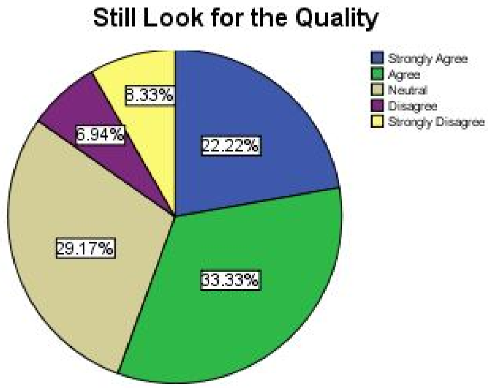
4. 2. 2. 7. When selecting foods, I look for the quality despite the economic crisis
Table 9: Still Look for the Quality

Still Look for the Quality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	16	22.2	22.2	22.2
	Agree	24	33.3	33.3	55.6
	Neutral	21	29.2	29.2	84.7
	Disagree	5	6.9	6.9	91.7
	Strongly Disagree	6	8.3	8.3	100
	Total	72	100	100	

It is shown that, 22% or 61 of the 72 participants strongly agreed selecting a product based on the quality, while respondents that agreed with selecting a product based on the quality was 33% or 24 of the 72 participants. 29% of participants were neutral and 7% or 5 of the 72 participants surveyed disagreed to selecting a product based on the quality. Finally, 8% or 6 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed with selecting a product based on the quality.

Pie Chart 8: Still Look for the Quality



4. 2. 2. 8. When selecting food, price has the highest priority over quality

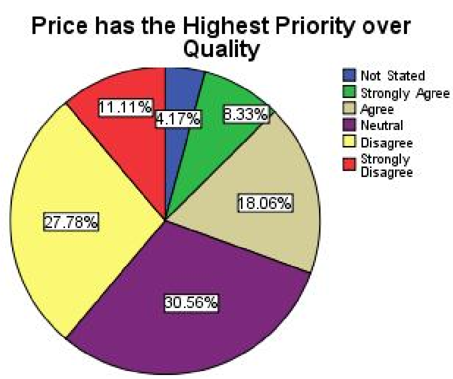
Table 10: Price has the Highest Priority over Quality

Price has the Highest Priority over Quality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	3	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Strongly Agree	6	8.3	8.3	12.5
	Agree	13	18.1	18.1	30.6
	Neutral	22	30.6	30.6	61.1
	Disagree	20	27.8	27.8	88.9
	Strongly Disagree	8	11.1	11.1	100
	Total	72	100	100	

According to the data, 8% or 6 of the 72 participants strongly agreed that price has the highest priority over quality, while respondents that agreed with price having the highest priority over quality was 18% or 13 of the 72 participants. 31% of participants were neutral and 28% or 20 of the 72 participants surveyed disagreed that price has the highest priority over quality. Finally, 11% or 8 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed that price has the highest priority over quality. 3 participants of the survey did not respond to this question.

Pie Chart 9: Price has the Highest Priority over Quality



4. 2. 2. 9. I switched to cheaper brands/retailers' brands in my food purchases due to economic crisis

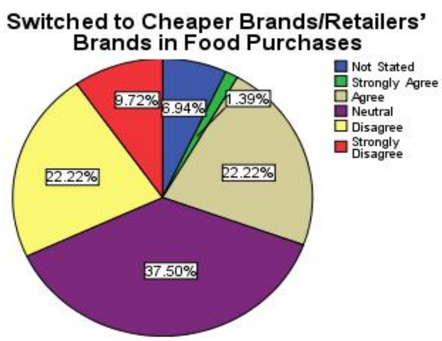
Table 11: Switched to Cheaper Brands/Retailers' Brands in Food Purchases

Switched to Cheaper Brands/Retailers' Brands in Food Purchases

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	5	6.9	6.9	6.9
	Strongly Agree	1	1.4	1.4	8.3
	Agree	16	22.2	22.2	30.6
	Neutral	27	37.5	37.5	68.1
	Disagree	16	22.2	22.2	90.3
	Strongly Disagree	7	9.7	9.7	100
	Total	72	100	100	

According to the data, 1% or 1 of the 72 participants strongly agreed that they switched to cheaper brands or retailers in food purchases, while respondents that agreed with switching to cheaper brands or retailers in food purchases was 22% or 16 of the 72 participants. 38% of participants were neutral to switching to cheaper brands or retailers in food purchases and 22% or 16 of the 72 participants surveyed disagreed that they switched to cheaper brands or retailers in food purchases. Finally, 10% or 7 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed that they switched to cheaper brands or retailers in food purchases. 5 participants of the survey did not respond to this question.

Pie Chart 10: Switched to Cheaper Brands/Retailers' Brands in Food Purchases



4. 2. 2. 10. I switched from finest/luxury ranges to economy range in food products due to economic crisis

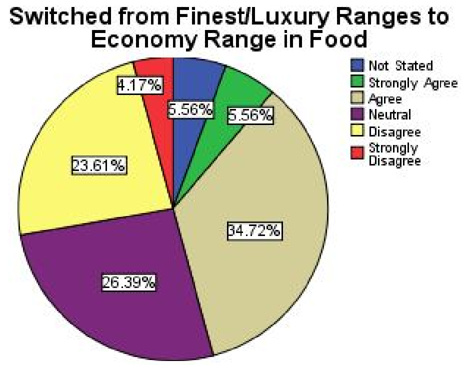
Table 12: Switched from Finest/Luxury Ranges to Economy Range in Food

Switched from Finest/Luxury Ranges to Economy Range in Food

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	4	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Strongly Agree	4	5.6	5.6	11.1
	Agree	25	34.7	34.7	45.8
	Neutral	19	26.4	26.4	72.2
	Disagree	17	23.6	23.6	95.8
	Strongly Disagree	3	4.2	4.2	100
	Total	72	100	100	

As can be seen in the table above, 6% or 4 of the 72 participants strongly agreed that they switched from luxury food items to economic food items, while respondents that agreed with switching from luxury food items to economic food items was 35% or 25 of the 72 participants. 26% of participants were neutral to switching from luxury food items to economic food items and 24% or 17 of the 72 participants surveyed disagreed that they switched from luxury food items to economic food items. Finally, 4% or 3 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed that they switched from luxury food items to economic food items. Additionally, 4 participants of the survey did not give a response.

Pie Chart 11: Switched from Finest/Luxury Ranges to Economy Range in Food



4. 2. 2. 11. I switched from organic food to non-organic food due to economic crisis

Table 13: Switched from Organic Food to Non-Organic Food

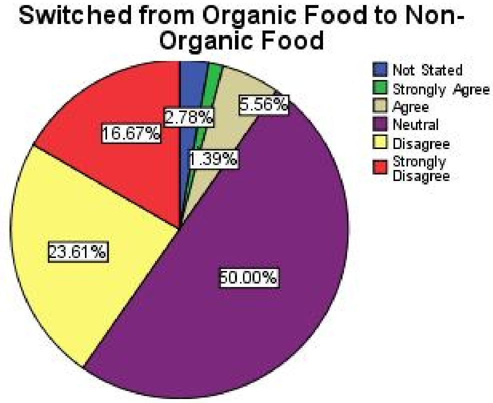
Switched from Organic Food to Non-Organic Food

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	2	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Strongly Agree	1	1.4	1.4	4.2
	Agree	4	5.6	5.6	9.7
	Neutral	36	50	50	59.7
	Disagree	17	23.6	23.6	83.3
	Strongly Disagree	12	16.7	16.7	100
	Total	72	100	100	

As can be seen in the table above, 1% or 1 of the 72 participants strongly agreed that they switched from organic food items to non-organic food items, while respondents that agreed with switching from organic food items to non-organic food items was 6% or 4 of the 72 participants.

Additionally, 50% of participants were neutral to switching from organic food items to non-organic food items and 24% or 17 of the 72 participants surveyed disagreed that they switched from organic food items to non-organic food items. Finally, 17% or 12 of the 72 participants strongly disagreed that they switched from organic food items to non-organic food items. 2 participants of the survey did give a response.

Pie Chart 12: Switched from Organic Food to Non-Organic Food



4. 2. 2. 12. I now do not consider environmental effects of how food is produced

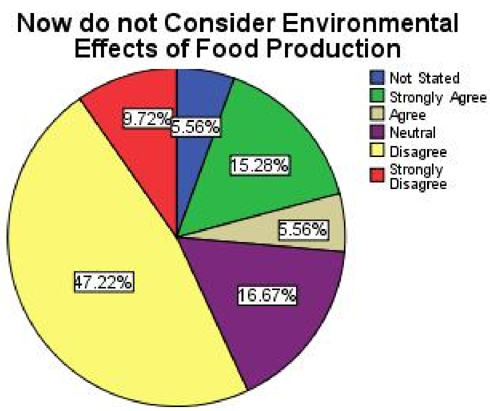
Table 14: Not Considering Environmental Effects of Food Production

Now do not Consider Environmental Effects of Food Production

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	4	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Strongly Agree	11	15.3	15.3	20.8
	Agree	4	5.6	5.6	26.4
	Neutral	12	16.7	16.7	43.1
	Disagree	34	47.2	47.2	90.3
	Strongly Disagree	7	9.7	9.7	100
	Total	72	100	100	

As can be seen in table 14, when asked if the participants consider the environmental effects of food production, 15% of respondents strongly agreed, 6% agreed and 17% were neutral. 47% of the participants indicated that they disagreed to considering the environmental effects on food production, while 10% strongly disagreed. A total of 4 participants did not respond to this question.

Pie Chart 13: Not Considering Environmental Effects of Food Production



4. 2. 2. 13. I now do not consider buying locally produced food over those produced in foreign countries

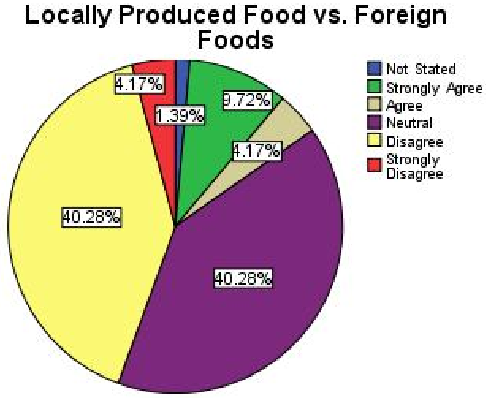
Table 15: Not Considering buying Locally Produced Food over Foreign Foods

Locally Produced Food vs. Foreign Foods

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Strongly Agree	7	9.7	9.7	11.1
	Agree	3	4.2	4.2	15.3
	Neutral	29	40.3	40.3	55.6
	Disagree	29	40.3	40.3	95.8
	Strongly Disagree	3	4.2	4.2	100
	Total	72	100	100	

According to the data, 10% of respondents strongly agreed, 4% agreed, and 40% were neutral. 40% of the participants indicated that they disagreed to preferring locally produced food over foreign foods, while 4% strongly disagreed. A total of 1 participant did not answer this question.

Pie Chart 14: Not Considering buying Locally Produced Food over Foreign Foods



4. 2. 2. 14. I have been buying food products in smaller packages

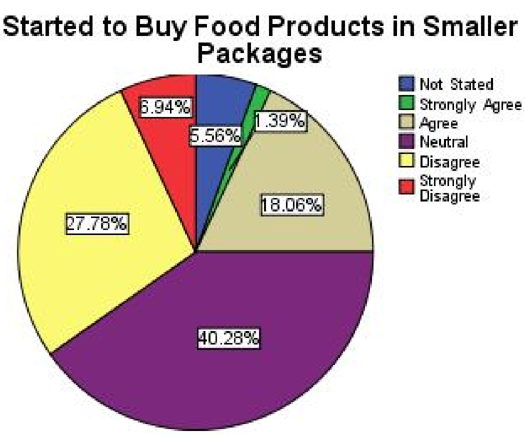
Table 16: Started to Buy Food Products in Smaller Packages

Started to Buy Food Products in Smaller Packages

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	4	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Strongly Agree	1	1.4	1.4	6.9
	Agree	13	18.1	18.1	25
	Neutral	29	40.3	40.3	65.3
	Disagree	20	27.8	27.8	93.1
	Strongly Disagree	5	6.9	6.9	100
	Total	72	100	100	

According to the table, 1% of respondents strongly agreed, 18% agreed, and 40% were neutral. 28% of the participants indicated that they disagreed with buying food products in smaller packages, while 7% strongly disagreed. 4 participants did not provide a response to this question.

Pie Chart 15: Started to Buy Food Products in Smaller Packages



4. 2. 2. 15. I have been looking for promotions when doing food shopping

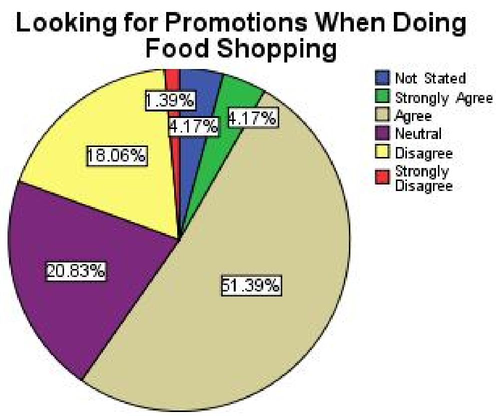
Table 17: Looking for Promotions When Doing Food Shopping

Looking for Promotions When Doing Food Shopping

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	3	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Strongly Agree	3	4.2	4.2	8.3
	Agree	37	51.4	51.4	59.7
	Neutral	15	20.8	20.8	80.6
	Disagree	13	18.1	18.1	98.6
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	1.4	100
	Total	72	100	100	

Table 17 presents data that reflects the level of agreement with participants when asked if they have been looking for promotions when shopping for food. 4% of participants strongly agreed with looking for promotions when shopping for food, 51% agreed, and 21% were neutral.
18% of the participants indicated that they disagreed with looking for promotions when shopping for food, while 1% strongly disagreed. 3 participants did not respond to this question.

Pie Chart 16: Looking for Promotions When Doing Food Shopping



4. 2. 2. 16. I now prefer shopping at large hypermarkets

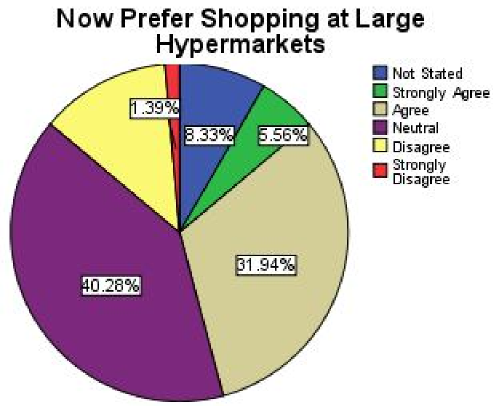
Table 18: Preferring Shopping at Large Hypermarkets

Now Prefer Shopping at Large Hypermarkets

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	6	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Strongly Agree	4	5.6	5.6	13.9
	Agree	23	31.9	31.9	45.8
	Neutral	29	40.3	40.3	86.1
	Disagree	9	12.5	12.5	98.6
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	1.4	100
	Total	72	100	100	

Table 18 shows the results of data collected that reflects the level of agreement with participants when asked if they now prefer to shop at large hypermarkets. Out of the 72 participants, 6% of strongly agreed with preferring to shop at large hypermarkets, 32% agreed, while 40% were neutral. 13% of the participants disagreed with preferring to shop at large hypermarkets, while 1% strongly disagreed. 6 of the total participants did not respond to this question.

Pie Chart 17: Preferring Shopping at Large Hypermarkets



4. 2. 2. 17. I am now buying basic food rather than snacks, sweets, pastry, etc.

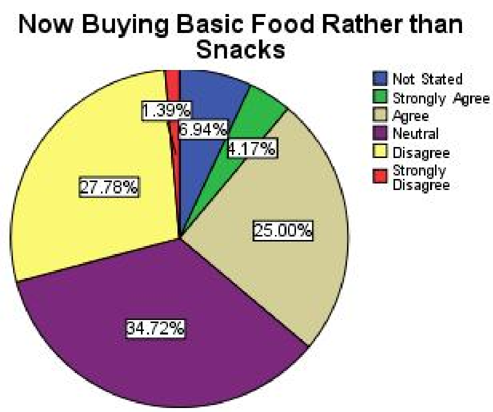
Table 19: Buying Basic Food Rather than Snacks

Now Buying Basic Food Rather than Snacks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Stated	5	6.9	6.9	6.9
	Strongly Agree	3	4.2	4.2	11.1
	Agree	18	25	25	36.1
	Neutral	25	34.7	34.7	70.8
	Disagree	20	27.8	27.8	98.6
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	1.4	100
	Total	72	100	100	

Table 19 represents the data collected that shows the level of agreement with participants when asked if they now prefer to buy basic food rather than snacks. From the 72 participants, 4% strongly agreed with preferring to buy basic food rather than snacks, 25% agreed, and 35% were neutral. 28% of the participants disagreed with preferring to buy basic food rather than snacks, and 1% strongly disagreed. 5 out of the total 72 participants did not give a response.

Pie Chart 18: Buying Basic Food Rather than Snacks



4. 2. 2. 18. Due to economic crisis, my loyalty towards a particular retailer is reduced

Table 20: Loyalty towards a Particular Retailer

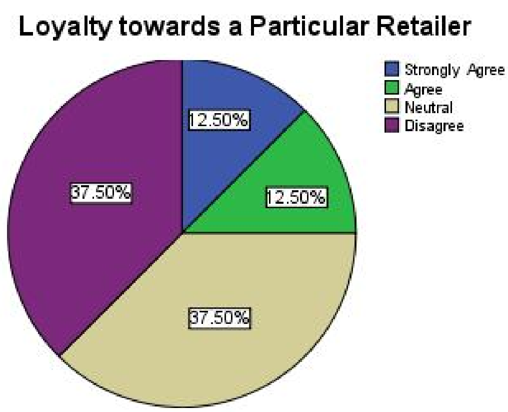
Loyalty towards a Particular Retailer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	9	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Agree	9	12.5	12.5	25
	Neutral	27	37.5	37.5	62.5
	Disagree	27	37.5	37.5	100
	Total	72	100	100	

Table 20 shows the level of agreement with loyalty towards a particular retailer. From the 72 participants, 13% strongly agreed with being loyal to a particular retailer, 13% agreed, and 38% were neutral.

Finally, 38% of the participants disagreed with being loyal to a particular retailer.

Pie Chart 19: Loyalty towards a Particular Retailer



4. 2. 2. 19. My preference in shopping at a retailer depends on promotions and prices due to economic crisis

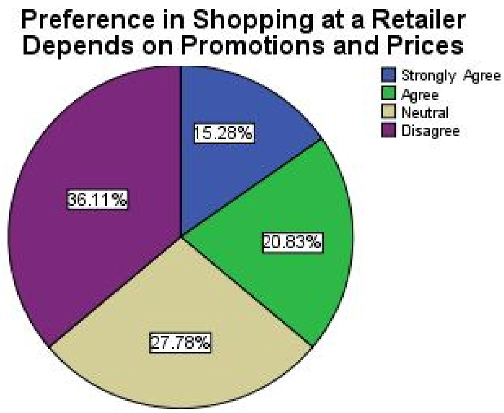
Table 21: Preference in Shopping at a Retailer Depends on Promotions and Prices

Preference in Shopping at a Retailer Depends on Promotions and Prices

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	11	15.3	15.3	15.3
	Agree	15	20.8	20.8	36.1
	Neutral	20	27.8	27.8	63.9
	Disagree	26	36.1	36.1	100
	Total	72	100	100	

Table 21 presents data showing the level of agreement with participants when asked if their preference in shopping at a retailer depends on promotions and pricing. Of the 72 participants, 15% strongly agreed with depending on promotions and pricing, 21% agreed, and 28% were neutral, and 36% of the participants disagreed with depending on promotions and pricing.

Pie Chart 20: Preference in Shopping at a Retailer Depends on Promotions and Prices



4. 2. 2. 20. I prefer cheap retailers such as Tesco, Asda, Morrisson over M&S, Sainsbury's or Waitrose

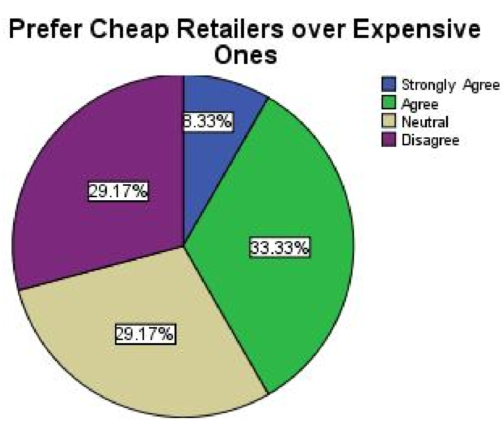
Table 22: Prefer Cheap Retailers over Expensive Ones

Prefer Cheap Retailers over Expensive Ones

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	6	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Agree	24	33.3	33.3	41.7
	Neutral	21	29.2	29.2	70.8
	Disagree	21	29.2	29.2	100
	Total	72	100	100	

In table 22 data showing the level of agreement with participants when asked if they prefer cheap retailers over cheap ones are seen. 8% of the respondents strongly agreed with preferring cheap retailers over cheap ones, 33% agreed, 29% were neutral, and 29% of the participants disagreed with preferring cheap retailers over cheap ones.

Pie Chart 21: Prefer Cheap Retailers over Expensive Ones



5. Key Findings and Discussion

The results show that despite the economic crisis consumer shopping habit and their confidence about spending did not change despite the crisis. The results showed that consumers did not switch to unbranded products or started to buy products in smaller packages. Moreover, the results showed that in some situations, there is a great resistance to change shopping habits despite the crisis. For instance, numerous numbers of consumers switch to cheaper brands; however, significant number of consumers continues to purchase brands they usually prefer. It is the same for preference regarding local brands over foreign brands; looking for promotions when doing shopping; avoiding not be attracted to free gifs.

These findings indicate that economic crisis cause changes in consumer shopping habit and their spending habits but it does not involve total abandonment of usual shopping habits. Change first occurs in product preference and consumer confidence to some extent. However, consumers tend to pursue their choices which develop over time and become their nature in shopping habits. This includes preferences about brand choices. These findings are inconsistent with the findings of Ang et al. (2000). The results also showed that despite the crisis, consumers do not change their food consuming motivators.

For instance, most consumers do not reduce buying red meat due to economic crisis or buy less poultry meat; do not prefer fast-food retailers if they need to eat out; do not prefer ready meals over cooking because of its lower cost; still try to eat a balanced diet; still look for the quality; still consider environmental effects of food production but started to dine in rather than eating out; switched from finest or luxury ranges to economy range in food; look for promotions and prefer to shop at larger hypermarkets. These results are inconsistent with the findings of Ang et al. (2000). In terms of food consumption pattern, consumers show loyalty towards their favourite retailer and their retailer preference is not driven by offered promotions or prices but prefer cheap retailers over expensive ones. These findings are not consistent with the findings of Ang et al. (2000). It was also identified that significant number of consumers are indecisive whether price has the highest priority over quality; whether to change cheaper brands/retailers in their food purchases; whether to switch from organic food to non-organic food; whether started to buy food in smaller products and whether they started to avoid buying unnecessary products such as snacks, sweets, pastry, etc. The results also showed that significant number of consumers do not consider buying locally produced food over foreign foods but at the same time significant number of consumer are indecisive whether they consider buying locally produced food over foreign foods.

In the light of these findings it can be said that income is the most important factors which shape consumer food consumption behaviour. As stated by Garcia and Molina, (1995), Gracia and Albisu (1996), Angulo et al. (1997), this is due to income elasticity of food and because of the risk in reduction or loss of income consumers change their food consumption preference to cheaper or low quality products. However, the findings of this study show that switching to cheaper and necessary products occur among some consumers and some continue to pursue their usual shopping behaviour. This finding is consistent with the findings of Gracia and Albisu (1999).

The findings of this study regarding food motivators showed that despite the economic crisis consumers do not give up on their several preferences and it could be related to the “feel-good factor” suggested by (Richardson, 2008). This could be related to the fact that healthier products, organic food or environmental friendly products offer multiple benefits to consumers. By consuming these products consumers stay healthy, act socially responsible toward environment but also feel the luxury. This might explain why consumers still continue with following their shopping habits despite the economic crisis.

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