

Factors Influencing Consumer Purchase Behavior of Saudi Dates

Mohammad Ali Almushaiti

Master of Business Administration, Almushaiti Agricultural Marketing, Buraydah, Saudi Arabia. Email: almushity1@gmail.com



Paper type: Article

Received: 13 March 2025
Revised: 28 March 2025
Accepted: 30 March 2025
Published: 01 April 2025

Citation: Almushaiti, M. A. (2025). Factors influencing consumer purchase behavior of Saudi dates. *American Journal of Business Science Philosophy*, 2(1), 59-72. <https://doi.org/10.70122/ajbsp.v2i1.27>

Abstract

This study examines the factors influencing consumer behavior toward Saudi dates, focusing on the roles of hedonic values, utilitarian values, purchase intention, and actual purchase behavior. A cross-sectional study design was employed, with data collected through an online survey from 271 consumers who include dates as part of their dietary plan. The questionnaire, translated into Arabic, was pilot-tested with 35 participants to ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement scales. Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling to explore the relationships between the constructs. The findings reveal that both hedonic values and utilitarian values significantly influence purchase intention, which in turn strongly predicts actual purchase behavior. The study demonstrates that consumers who derive pleasure and practical benefits from Saudi dates are more likely to intend to purchase them, and these intentions strongly translate into actual purchasing behavior. Additionally, the mediating role of purchase intention highlights its importance in linking hedonic and utilitarian values to actual behavior. By addressing both emotional and practical aspects of consumer behavior, businesses can create compelling marketing strategies that enhance purchase intentions and drive actual sales.

Keywords: Saudi dates; intention; behavior; hedonic value; utilitarian value

© 2025 The Authors. Published by American Open Science Philosophy. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Dates have long been a staple food in many cultures, particularly in the Middle East, where they hold significant cultural, nutritional, and economic value. Saudi Arabia, one of the world's leading producers of dates, has a rich tradition of date cultivation and consumption (Almutawa, 2022). In recent years, there has been growing interest in understanding consumer behavior toward dates, not only as a traditional food but also as a product with potential for global market expansion (Al-Shreed et al., 2012). Consumer behavior is shaped by a combination of emotional and practical factors. Hedonic values refer to the emotional and pleasure-driven aspects of consumption, such as the enjoyment, relaxation, and sense of well-being that a product provides (Alhamdan et al., 2024). Consuming Saudi dates may evoke feelings of pleasure due to their taste or cultural significance (Alumushaiti, 2024). On the other hand, utilitarian values relate to the practical and functional benefits of a product, such as its convenience, affordability, and health benefits. In the case of Saudi dates, utilitarian values may include their nutritional content, suitability as a natural sweetener, and ease of consumption as a snack. Understanding how these values influence consumer decisions is crucial for developing effective marketing strategies and enhancing product appeal.

In the context of Saudi dates, hedonic values may include the pleasure derived from their taste, their cultural significance, and their role in traditional celebrations. Utilitarian values, meanwhile, may encompass the health benefits of dates, their suitability as a natural sweetener, and their convenience as a ready-to-eat snack. These values are likely to shape consumers' purchase intention, which refers to their willingness or plan to

buy a product. Purchase intention, in turn, is a key predictor of actual purchase behavior, which reflects the real-world actions of consumers in purchasing and consuming the product.

Despite the cultural and economic importance of dates, there is limited research on how hedonic and utilitarian values influence consumer behavior toward Saudi dates. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the relationships between these constructs and providing insights into how they drive purchase intention and actual purchase behavior. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the literature on consumer behavior and offer practical recommendations for marketers, businesses, and policymakers. By understanding the emotional and practical factors that influence consumer decisions, businesses can develop targeted marketing strategies that enhance product appeal and drive sales. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of fostering positive purchase intentions as a pathway to actual purchasing behavior, providing valuable insights for consumer engagement and retention.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Hedonic Values

Hedonic values refer to the emotional and pleasure-driven aspects of consumption, which are often associated with sensory satisfaction, enjoyment, and emotional connection (Maehle et al., 2015). In the context of food products, hedonic values play a significant role in shaping consumer preferences and behaviors. The taste, aroma, and texture of a product can evoke positive emotions and enhance its appeal (El-Habba & Al-Mulhim, 2013). In the case of Saudi dates, hedonic values may include the pleasure derived from their taste, the cultural significance associated with their consumption, and the emotional satisfaction of consuming a traditional and culturally rich product. Research has consistently shown that hedonic values are a key driver of consumer behavior. Consumers often seek products that provide sensory pleasure and emotional satisfaction (Pohjanheimo et al., 2010). These values are particularly important in the food industry, where sensory attributes such as taste and texture significantly influence purchase decisions. Consumers who associate a product with positive emotions and sensory pleasure are more likely to develop a strong preference for it and intend to purchase it (Wichchukit & O'Mahony, 2015).

In the context of Saudi dates, hedonic values may also include the cultural and traditional significance of dates in Saudi society (AlGeffari et al., 2016). Dates are often consumed during religious and cultural celebrations, which can evoke feelings of nostalgia and emotional connection. This cultural significance enhances the hedonic appeal of dates and makes them a preferred choice for consumers who value tradition and heritage. Therefore, hedonic values are expected to play a critical role in influencing consumers' purchase intentions toward Saudi dates. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Hedonic values influence on purchase intention

2.2. Utilitarian Values

Utilitarian values refer to the practical and functional benefits of a product, such as convenience, affordability, and health benefits. In the context of food products, utilitarian values are often associated with the nutritional content, ease of consumption, and cost-effectiveness of the product (Firmansyah et al., 2022; Valesi et al., 2024). Consumers may choose a product because it is healthy, convenient, or affordable (Elsabea, 2012). In the case of Saudi dates, utilitarian values may include their nutritional benefits, suitability as a natural sweetener, and convenience as a ready-to-eat snack (Basaran & Buyukyilmaz, 2015). Research has shown that utilitarian values are a key driver of consumer behavior, particularly for products that offer practical benefits (Katt & Meixner, 2020). Consumers often prioritize functional attributes such as health benefits, convenience, and affordability when making purchase decisions. Consumers who perceive a product as healthy and convenient are more likely to intend to purchase it. In the context of Saudi dates, utilitarian values may also include their suitability as a healthy alternative to sweets and their ability to provide sustained energy.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the health benefits of dates, particularly their high fiber content, antioxidants, and natural sugars. These nutritional benefits make dates an attractive choice for health-conscious consumers who seek functional foods that support their well-being. Additionally, the convenience of dates as a ready-to-eat snack enhances their utilitarian appeal, particularly for busy consumers who value convenience and practicality. Therefore, utilitarian values are expected to play a critical role in influencing consumers' purchase intentions toward Saudi dates. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Utilitarian values influence on purchase intention

2.3. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the likelihood or plan to purchase a product and is a critical construct in consumer behavior research (Mabkhot, 2024). It is often influenced by a combination of emotional and practical factors, such as hedonic and utilitarian values, and serves as a precursor to actual purchase behavior. Purchase intention is a strong predictor of actual behavior, particularly in the food industry (Carrington et al., 2010). Consumers who intend to purchase a product are more likely to follow through with their purchases if the product aligns with their values and preferences (Abbasi et al., 2024). In the context of Saudi dates, purchase intention is expected to be influenced by both hedonic and utilitarian values. Consumers who derive pleasure and emotional satisfaction from consuming dates (hedonic values) and perceive them as healthy and convenient (utilitarian values) are more likely to intend to purchase them. Additionally, purchase intention is expected to play a mediating role in the relationship between consumer values and actual purchase behavior (Al Falah et al., 2024). This means that hedonic and utilitarian values influence purchase intention, which in turn drives actual purchasing behavior.

Purchase intention plays a mediating role in the relationship between both hedonic and utilitarian values and actual purchase behavior. The emotional and pleasure-driven aspects of Saudi dates, such as their taste and cultural significance, enhance purchase intention, which in turn drives actual purchase behavior. Similarly, the practical and functional benefits of Saudi dates, such as their health benefits, convenience, and affordability, strengthen purchase intention, which subsequently influences actual purchase behavior. In this way, both hedonic and utilitarian values indirectly impact actual purchasing behavior through their influence on purchase intention. Consumers who derive pleasure and emotional satisfaction from consuming Saudi dates or perceive them as healthy and convenient are more likely to intend to purchase them, and this intention ultimately leads to actual purchasing behavior. This highlights the central role of purchase intention as a key link between consumer values and real-world actions (Alali et al., 2023). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H3: Purchase intention influences on actual purchase behavior

H4: Purchase intention mediates between hedonic values and actual purchase behavior

H5: Purchase intention mediates between utilitarian values and actual purchase behavior

Figure 1 depicts the research model.

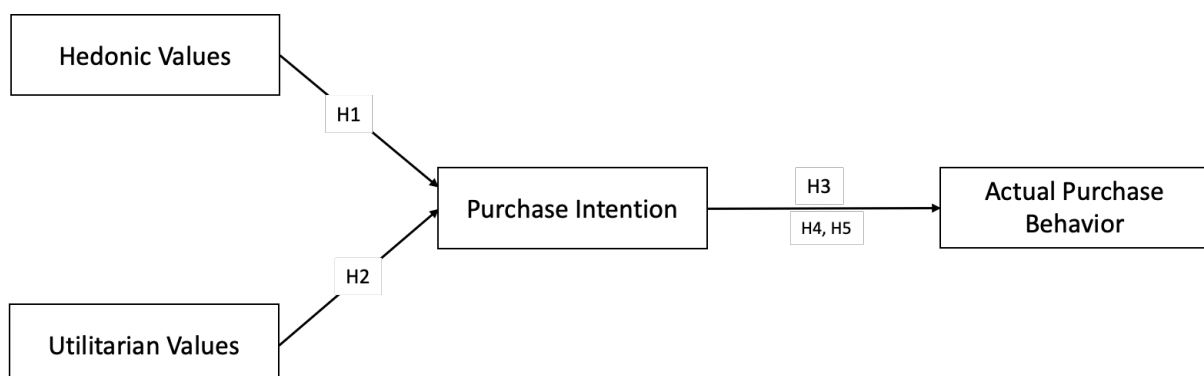


Figure 1. Research model.

3. Methodology

The methodology of this study was designed to examine the factors influencing consumer behavior toward Saudi dates, focusing on hedonic values, utilitarian values, purchase intention, and actual purchase behavior. A cross-sectional study design was employed, which involved collecting data from consumers at a single point in time. This approach allowed for the efficient gathering of insights into consumer perceptions and behaviors related to Saudi dates. The target population consisted of consumers who include dates as part of their dietary plan, ensuring that the participants were relevant to the study's objectives. Data collection was conducted through an online survey, which provided a convenient and efficient way to reach a wide audience. The questionnaire was carefully designed and translated into Arabic to ensure clarity and accessibility for the target population. Prior to the main data collection, a pilot test was conducted with 35 participants to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement scales. The pilot test helped refine the questionnaire and ensured that the items were clear, consistent, and capable of capturing the intended constructs accurately. The study utilized a convenience sampling technique, which involved selecting participants based on their availability and willingness to participate. While this method is non-probabilistic, it was deemed appropriate for this study due to its practicality and ability to provide preliminary insights into consumer behavior. Data collection took place in March 2025, ensuring that the findings were based on recent and relevant consumer responses.

The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale to measure participants' responses, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." This scale was chosen for its ability to capture the intensity of respondents' attitudes and perceptions effectively. The constructs in the study were measured using adapted scales from previous research. Specifically, five items for hedonic values were adapted from Abdulalem (2024), seven items for utilitarian values were also adapted from Abdulalem (2024), four items for purchase intention were adapted from Xin and Seo (2020) and Mohammed (2021), and three items for actual purchase behavior were adapted from Xin and Seo (2020) and Mohammed (2021). These adapted scales ensured that the measurement items were validated and reliable for the context of this study. Data analysis was performed using "structural equation modeling" (SEM), a robust statistical technique that allows for the examination of complex relationships between multiple constructs. SEM was chosen for its ability to simultaneously assess measurement models (validity and reliability of constructs) and structural models (relationships between constructs).

4. Results

Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the demographics of the study participants, totaling 271 individuals. The majority of participants were male, representing 83% (n=226) of the sample, while females accounted for 17% (n=45). This indicates a significant gender imbalance in the study population, with males being the predominant group. The age groups were divided into five categories. The largest proportion of participants (37%, n=99) were aged 55 and above, making them the most represented age group. This was followed by individuals aged 35–44 (28%, n=75), 45–54 (16%, n=44), 25–34 (14%, n=38), and below 25 (6%, n=15). The data suggests that the study primarily involved older adults, with relatively fewer younger participants. In terms of education, the majority of participants held a Bachelor's Degree (58%, n=156), followed by those with a High School Diploma (18%, n=49). A smaller percentage had a Master's Degree or higher (15%, n=42), while 6% (n=17) held a PhD Degree. Only 3% (n=7) of participants had an Elementary School education. This indicates that the study population was relatively well-educated, with a significant proportion having at least a Bachelor's Degree. The employment status of participants varied, with the majority being employed full-time (52%, n=141). Self-employed individuals made up 21% (n=56), the same percentage as those who were unemployed. A smaller proportion were employed part-time (4%, n=12), and only 2% (n=6) were students. This distribution highlights that the study population was primarily composed of working individuals, with a notable percentage being self-employed or unemployed. Geographically, the largest group of participants resided in the Central Region (47%, n=128), followed by the Eastern Region (22%, n=60). The Northern and Southern Regions each accounted for 11% (n=29 and n=30, respectively), while the Western Region had the smallest representation at 9% (n=24). This suggests that the study population was predominantly concentrated in the Central and Eastern Regions.

Table 1. Demographics of participants (n=271).

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	226	83%
	Female	45	17%
Age	Below 25	15	6%
	25 – 34	38	14%
	35 – 44	75	28%
	45 – 54	44	16%
	Above 55	99	37%
Education	Elementary School	7	3%
	Bachelor's Degree	156	58%
	PhD Degree	17	6%
	Master's Degree or Higher	42	15%
	High School Diploma	49	18%
Employment Status	Employed (full-time)	141	52%
	Employed (part-time)	12	4%
	Self-employed	56	21%
	Student	6	2%
	Unemployed	56	21%
Region/Location	Northern Region	29	11%
	Southern Region	30	11%
	Central Region	128	47%
	Western Region	24	9%
	Eastern Region	60	22%

Table 2 provides insights into the consumption habits, purchasing behavior, preferences, and knowledge of dates among the study participants (n=271). The data is categorized into six key areas, each offering valuable information about the participants' interactions with dates. The majority of participants (63%, n=171) reported eating dates daily, indicating that dates are a regular part of their diet. A significant portion (31%, n=83) consumed dates 3–5 times per week, while only a small percentage ate dates occasionally (5%, n=14) or rarely (1%, n=2). Notably, almost no participants (0%, n=1) reported eating dates 1–2 times per week. This suggests that dates are a staple food for most participants, with very few consuming them infrequently. When it comes to purchasing dates, the most popular choice was date festivals (45%, n=123), followed by supermarkets (15%, n=41) and direct purchases from dates markets (17%, n=46). A smaller percentage of participants bought dates online (5%, n=13), from specialized shops (7%, n=20), or directly from farms (10%, n=28). This indicates that traditional and direct purchasing methods, such as festivals and markets, are preferred over modern retail or online options.

The majority of participants (52%, n=141) preferred dates priced between 20–50 SAR per kg, reflecting a preference for mid-range pricing. A quarter of the participants (25%, n=67) opted for dates priced below 20 SAR per kg, while 13% (n=35) were willing to pay 50–100 SAR per kg. Only 10% (n=28) were comfortable purchasing dates priced above 100 SAR per kg. This suggests that affordability and value for money are important considerations for most participants. Quality was a critical factor for the vast majority of participants, with 79% (n=215) stating that it is very important when purchasing dates. Another 14% (n=39) considered it important, while only a small percentage were neutral (4%, n=12) or found it slightly or not important at all (1% each, n=2 and n=3). This highlights the high priority placed on quality in the decision-making process. Regarding the size of dates, most participants preferred medium-sized dates (52%, n=141), followed by large-sized dates (37%, n=99). A small percentage (1%, n=4) preferred small-sized dates, while 10% (n=27) had no preference. This indicates a general preference for balanced or larger dates, with minimal interest in smaller varieties. Light-colored dates (golden or yellowish) were the most preferred (59%, n=161), followed by medium brown dates (29%, n=79). Dark-colored dates (deep brown or black) were the least preferred (3%, n=8), and 8% (n=23) had no preference. This suggests that lighter shades are more appealing to the majority of participants. A significant portion of participants reported being very knowledgeable (36%, n=98) or extremely knowledgeable (29%, n=78) about different varieties of dates. Another 25% (n=67) considered themselves moderately knowledgeable, while smaller percentages were slightly knowledgeable (6%, n=16) or not knowledgeable at all (4%, n=12). This indicates that the study population is generally well-informed about date varieties.

Table 2. Consumer dates knowledge and consumption.

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percent
How often do you eat dates?	Daily	171	63%
	3-5 times per week	83	31%
	1-2 times per week	1	0%
	Occasionally	14	5%
	Rarely	2	1%
Where do you usually purchase dates?	Supermarkets	41	15%
	Date festivals	123	45%
	Online stores	13	5%
	Direct from dates market	46	17%
	Specialized shop for dates	20	7%
	Direct from farm	28	10%
What is your price preference when buying dates?	Below 20 SAR per kg	67	25%
	20 - 50 SAR per kg	141	52%
	50 - 100 SAR per kg	35	13%
	Above 100 SAR per kg	28	10%
How important is the quality of dates when making a purchase?	Not important at all	3	1%
	Slightly important	2	1%
	Neutral	12	4%
	Important	39	14%
	Very important	215	79%
What is your preference for the size of dates?	Small-sized – I prefer smaller dates	4	1%
	Medium-sized – I like a balanced size	141	52%
	Large-sized – I prefer bigger dates	99	37%
	No preference – Size does not matter to me	27	10%
What is your preference for the color of dates?	Light-colored (Golden or yellowish)	161	59%
	Medium brown (Moderate brown shades)	79	29%
	Dark-colored (Deep brown or black)	8	3%
	No preference (Color does not matter to me)	23	8%
How knowledgeable are you about different varieties of dates?	Not knowledgeable at all	12	4%
	Slightly knowledgeable	16	6%
	Moderately knowledgeable	67	25%
	Very knowledgeable	98	36%
	Extremely knowledgeable	78	29%

Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of consumer preferences for different types of dates, categorized into first, second, and third preferences. The most preferred type of date among participants was Sukkari (سكري), with a significant majority (61%, n=166) selecting it as their top choice. This indicates a strong preference for Sukkari dates, which are known for their sweetness and soft texture. The second most preferred type was Khalas (خلاص), chosen by 25% (n=67) of participants. Other varieties, such as Ajwa (عجوة) (3%, n=7), Sagai (صفعي) (4%, n=12), and Barhi (برحي) (2%, n=5), were less popular as first preferences. Notably, some varieties like Safawi (صفاوي) and Mabroom (مبروم) received minimal or no first-preference votes, suggesting they are less favored. When it came to the second preference, Khalas (خلاص) emerged as the most popular choice, with 35% (n=95) of participants selecting it. This indicates that while Sukkari is the top choice, Khalas is also highly valued. Sukkari (سكري) remained a strong contender, with 18% (n=49) selecting it as their second preference. Other varieties, such as Barhi (برحي) (13%, n=36) and Sagai (صفعي) (13%, n=34), were also notable second preferences. Varieties like Safawi (صفاوي) and Mabroom (مبروم) again received minimal or no votes, reinforcing their lower popularity. For the third preference, Barhi (برحي) was the most selected variety, with 32% (n=88) of participants choosing it. This suggests that while Barhi is not a top choice for first or second preference, it is still appreciated as a third option. Sukkari (سكري) and Sagai (صفعي) were also notable third preferences, with 10% (n=28) and 13% (n=34) of participants selecting them, respectively. Khalas (خلاص), which was highly preferred as a first and second choice, saw a decline in popularity as a third preference (7%, n=19). Other varieties, such as Ajwa (عجوة) (11%, n=29) and Shagra (شغرا) (8%, n=21), also gained some traction as third preferences. The data reveals a clear hierarchy in consumer preferences for date varieties. Sukkari (سكري) dominates as the most preferred type, followed by Khalas (خلاص) as a strong second choice. Barhi (برحي) and Sagai (صفعي) are also popular but tend to rank lower as first or second preferences. Varieties like Safawi (صفاوي), Mabroom (مبروم), and Khudri (خضري) are less favored, receiving minimal or no votes across all preference categories. This suggests that sweetness, texture, and familiarity play a significant role in shaping

consumer preferences for dates. Sukkari and Khalas are the most popular date varieties among participants, with Barhi and Sagai also being appreciated as secondary options. The data highlights the strong preference for certain varieties while indicating limited interest in others, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior and preferences in the date market.

Table 3. Consumer preference for type of dates.

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percent
Which type of date do you prefer the most? (1st preference)	Ajwa (عجوة)	7	3%
	Sukkari (سكري)	166	61%
	Khudri (خضري)	1	0%
	Safawi (صفراوي)	0	0%
	Mabroom (مبروم)	2	1%
	Medjool (المجدول)	2	1%
	Barhi (برحي)	5	2%
	Sagai (صقعي)	12	4%
	Rothana (روثانة)	3	1%
	Khalas (خلاص)	67	25%
	Shagra (شقرا)	3	1%
What is your second preferred type of date? (2nd preference)	Nabtat Ali (نبتة علي)	3	1%
	Ajwa (عجوة)	7	3%
	Sukkari (سكري)	49	18%
	Khudri (خضري)	6	2%
	Safawi (صفراوي)	0	0%
	Mabroom (مبروم)	0	0%
	Medjool (المجدول)	9	3%
	Barhi (برحي)	36	13%
	Sagai (صقعي)	34	13%
	Rothana (روثانة)	11	4%
	Khalas (خلاص)	95	35%
What is your third preferred type of date? (3rd preference)	Shagra (شقرا)	17	6%
	Nabtat Ali (نبتة علي)	7	3%
	Ajwa (عجوة)	29	11%
	Sukkari (سكري)	28	10%
	Khudri (خضري)	10	4%
	Safawi (صفراوي)	3	1%
	Mabroom (مبروم)	2	1%
	Medjool (المجدول)	7	3%
	Barhi (برحي)	88	32%
	Sagai (صقعي)	34	13%
	Rothana (روثانة)	20	7%
	Khalas (خلاص)	19	7%
	Shagra (شقرا)	21	8%
	Nabtat Ali (نبتة علي)	10	4%

Table 4 provides insights into the regional origins of dates preferred by consumers, categorized into first, second, and third preferences. The overwhelming majority of participants (78%, n=211) preferred dates from the Qassim Region (تمور منطقة القصيم) as their top choice. This indicates a strong association between the Qassim Region and high-quality or highly favored dates. The Al-Ahsa Region (تمور منطقة الأحساء) was the second most preferred, with 15% (n=41) of participants selecting it as their first choice. Other regions, such as Medina (تمور المدينة المنورة) (2%, n=5), Al-Kharj Governorate (تمور محافظة الخرج) (1%, n=4), and the Northern Region (تمور المنطقة الشمالية) (2%, n=6), received minimal first-preference votes. The Southern Region (تمور المنطقة الجنوبية) and Al-Ghat Governorate (تمور محافظة الغاط) were the least preferred, each with only 1% (n=2) of the votes. This suggests that the Qassim Region is highly regarded for its dates, while other regions are less favored as primary sources. For the second preference, the Al-Ahsa Region (تمور منطقة الأحساء) emerged as the most popular choice, with 48% (n=130) of participants selecting it. This indicates that while Qassim dominates as the first preference, Al-Ahsa is also highly valued as a secondary option. The Qassim Region (تمور منطقة القصيم) remained significant, with 24% (n=65) of participants choosing it as their second preference. Other regions, such as Medina (تمور المدينة المنورة) (11%, n=30), Al-Kharj Governorate (تمور محافظة الخرج) (6%, n=17), and Al-Ghat Governorate (تمور محافظة الغاط) (6%, n=16), also gained some traction as second preferences. The Northern Region (تمور المنطقة الشمالية)

(الشمالية) and Southern Region (تمور المنطقة الجنوبية) were less popular, with 4% (n=10) and 1% (n=3) of the votes, respectively. When it came to the third preference, the Al-Ahsa Region (تمور منطقة الأحساء) remained a strong contender, with 25% (n=67) of participants selecting it. The Qassim Region (تمور منطقة القصيم) also maintained its relevance, with 22% (n=60) of participants choosing it as their third preference. Other regions, such as Al-Kharj Governorate (تمور محافظة الخرج) (20%, n=55), Medina (تمور المدينة المنورة) (18%, n=50), and Al-Ghat Governorate (تمور المنطقة الشمالية) (7%, n=19), were also notable third preferences. The Northern Region (تمور المنطقة الشمالية) received 7% (n=19) of the votes, while the Southern Region (تمور المنطقة الجنوبية) was the least preferred, with only 0% (n=1) of the votes. The data reveals a clear hierarchy in consumer preferences for the regional origins of dates. The Qassim Region (تمور منطقة القصيم) is the most preferred source of dates, particularly as a first choice, reflecting its strong reputation for producing high-quality dates. The Al-Ahsa Region (تمور منطقة الأحساء) is also highly valued, especially as a second and third preference. Other regions, such as Medina, Al-Kharj Governorate, and Al-Ghat Governorate, are appreciated but rank lower in preference. The Northern and Southern Regions are the least preferred, indicating limited consumer interest in dates from these areas.

Table 4. Consumer preferred type of date come from.

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percent
What is your first preferred type of date come from? (1st preference)	Dates of the Qassim Region – تمور منطقة القصيم	211	78%
	Region Dates of the Al-Ahsa – تمور منطقة الأحساء	41	15%
	Region Dates of the Medina – تمور المدينة المنورة	5	2%
	Governorate Dates of Al-Kharj – تمور محافظة الخرج	4	1%
	Region Dates of the Northern – تمور المنطقة الشمالية	6	2%
	Region Dates of the Southern – تمور المنطقة الجنوبية	2	1%
	Governorate Dates of Al-Ghat – تمور محافظة الغاط	2	1%
What is your second preferred type of date come from? (2nd preference)	Dates of the Qassim Region – تمور منطقة القصيم	65	24%
	Region Dates of the Al-Ahsa – تمور منطقة الأحساء	130	48%
	Region Dates of the Medina – تمور المدينة المنورة	30	11%
	Governorate Dates of Al-Kharj – تمور محافظة الخرج	17	6%
	Region Dates of the Northern – تمور المنطقة الشمالية	10	4%
	Region Dates of the Southern – تمور المنطقة الجنوبية	3	1%
	Governorate Dates of Al-Ghat – تمور محافظة الغاط	16	6%
What is your third preferred type of date come from? (3rd preference)	Dates of the Qassim Region – تمور منطقة القصيم	60	22%
	Region Dates of the Al-Ahsa – تمور منطقة الأحساء	67	25%
	Region Dates of the Medina – تمور المدينة المنورة	50	18%
	Governorate Dates of Al-Kharj – تمور محافظة الخرج	55	20%
	Region Dates of the Northern – تمور المنطقة الشمالية	19	7%
	Region Dates of the Southern – تمور المنطقة الجنوبية	1	0%
	Governorate Dates of Al-Ghat – تمور محافظة الغاط	19	7%

Table 5 presents a measurement model that evaluates four key constructs related to consumer behavior toward Saudi dates: Hedonic Values, Utilitarian Values, Purchase Intention, and Actual Purchase Behavior. Each construct is measured using multiple items, and the model provides statistical metrics to assess the reliability and validity of these constructs. The results indicate strong reliability and validity across all constructs, suggesting that the items used effectively capture the underlying dimensions of consumer behavior. The Hedonic Values construct reflects the emotional and pleasure-driven aspects of consuming Saudi dates. It is measured using five items (HV1 to HV5), all of which have factor loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating strong relationships with the construct. The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.796 and composite reliability value of 0.858 are both above the 0.7 threshold, demonstrating good internal consistency and reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.573, which is slightly below the ideal threshold of 0.6 but still acceptable, indicating that the construct explains a reasonable proportion of the variance in its items. This suggests that consumers associate Saudi dates with pleasure, relaxation, and a sense of well-being. The Utilitarian Values construct captures the practical and functional benefits of consuming Saudi dates. It is measured using seven items (UV1 to UV7), all of which have factor loadings above 0.7, indicating strong associations with the construct. The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.751 and composite reliability value of 0.834 are above the 0.7 threshold, confirming good reliability. The AVE of 0.676 exceeds the 0.5 threshold, indicating strong convergent validity, meaning the construct effectively explains the variance in its items. This suggests that consumers perceive Saudi dates as convenient, economical, health-beneficial, and a good alternative to

sweets or candy. The Purchase Intention construct measures the likelihood of consumers purchasing Saudi dates in the future. It is assessed using four items (PI1 to PI4), all with factor loadings above 0.7, indicating strong relationships with the construct. The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.847 and composite reliability value of 0.864 are well above the 0.7 threshold, demonstrating excellent internal consistency. The AVE of 0.711 is above the 0.5 threshold, indicating strong convergent validity. This suggests that consumers have a strong intention to purchase Saudi dates frequently and consistently. The Actual Purchase Behavior construct reflects the real-world purchasing behavior of consumers regarding Saudi dates. It is measured using three items (APB1 to APB3), all with factor loadings above 0.7, indicating strong associations with the construct. The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.816 and composite reliability value of 0.747 are above the 0.7 threshold, confirming good reliability. The AVE of 0.656 is above the 0.5 threshold, indicating strong convergent validity. This suggests that consumers are regular buyers of Saudi dates, prefer them over alternatives like candy or chocolate, and are willing to pay a premium price for them.

Table 5. Measurement model.

Items with Constructs	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Hedonic Values		0.796	0.858	0.573
HV1: "Buying Saudi dates would give me pleasure because of its taste"	0.758			
HV2: "Buying Saudi dates would feel like doing the morally right thing"	0.732			
HV3: "Buying Saudi dates would make me feel like a better person"	0.889			
HV4: "I would feel relaxed consuming Saudi dates"	0.789			
HV5: "Consuming traditional Saudi dates contributes to an improved sense of well-being"	0.821			
Utilitarian Values		0.751	0.834	0.676
UV1: "Buying Saudi dates is convenient"	0.736			
UV2: "Buying Saudi dates is pragmatic and economical"	0.864			
UV3: "Buying Saudi dates is interesting"	0.782			
UV4: "Buying Saudi dates is not a waste of money"	0.812			
UV5: "Saudi dates are beneficial for my health"	0.857			
UV6: "Saudi dates are characterized by its optimal energy content"	0.774			
UV7: "Saudi dates are good alternative of sweets/candy such as chocolates, candy, etc."	0.748			
Purchase Intention	0.847	0.864	0.708	0.711
PI1: "I intend to buy Saudi dates frequently"	0.788			
PI2: "I am likely to purchase Saudi dates consistently"	0.831			
PI3: "I am planning to purchase Saudi dates consistently"	0.763			
PI4: "I want to purchase Saudi dates consistently"	0.887			
Actual Purchase Behavior		0.816	0.747	0.656
APB1: "I am a regular buyer of Saudi dates"	0.841			
APB2: "I continue to purchase Saudi dates in comparison of candy/chocolate etc."	0.738			
APB3: "I never mind paying premium price for Saudi dates"	0.797			

Table 6 presents the discriminant validity of the constructs using the "Fornell-Larcker criterion", which is a method to assess whether constructs in a model are distinct from one another. The diagonal values represent the square root of the AVE for each construct, which are as follows: Actual Purchase Behavior (0.825), Hedonic Values (0.757), Purchase Intention (0.843), and Utilitarian Values (0.822). These values are higher than the correlations between each construct and the other constructs, confirming that each construct is distinct and captures a unique aspect of consumer behavior toward Saudi dates. The square root of the AVE for Actual Purchase Behavior (0.825) is greater than its correlations with Hedonic Values (0.639), Purchase Intention (0.634), and Utilitarian Values (0.593).

Similarly, the square root of the AVE for Hedonic Values (0.757) is greater than its correlations with Purchase Intention (0.531) and Utilitarian Values (0.477). The same pattern holds for Purchase Intention and Utilitarian Values, where their diagonal values exceed their correlations with other constructs. The highest correlation observed is between Purchase Intention and Utilitarian Values (0.668), which is still lower than the square root

of the AVE for both constructs (0.843 and 0.822, respectively). This suggests that while these constructs are related, they are distinct from one another. Similarly, the correlation between Actual Purchase Behavior and Hedonic Values (0.639) is moderate, but the square root of the AVE for both constructs confirm their distinctiveness.

Table 6. Discriminant validity (Fornell-larcker criterion).

	Actual Purchase Behavior	Hedonic Values	Purchase Intention	Utilitarian Values
Actual Purchase Behavior	0.825			
Hedonic Values	0.639	0.757		
Purchase Intention	0.634	0.531	0.843	
Utilitarian Values	0.593	0.477	0.668	0.822

Table 7 presents the path coefficients of the structural model, which examines the relationships between the constructs and tests the hypotheses (H1 to H5). The relationship between hedonic values and purchase intention (H1) is positive and significant, with a path coefficient (Beta) of 0.554 ($T = 7.823$, $p = 0$). This indicates that consumers who derive pleasure, relaxation, and a sense of well-being from Saudi dates are more likely to intend to purchase them. Similarly, the relationship between utilitarian values and purchase intention (H2) is also positive and significant, with a path coefficient of 0.75 ($T = 4.64$, $p = 0$). This suggests that consumers who perceive Saudi dates as convenient, economical, health-beneficial, and a good alternative to sweets are more likely to intend to purchase them. Both findings highlight the importance of emotional and practical factors in shaping consumer intentions. The relationship between purchase intention and actual purchase behavior (H3) is strong and significant, with a path coefficient of 0.834 ($T = 9.045$, $p = 0$). This indicates that consumers who intend to purchase Saudi dates are highly likely to follow through and actually buy them. This finding underscores the critical role of purchase intention as a predictor of real-world purchasing behavior.

Additionally, the indirect effects of hedonic values and utilitarian values on actual purchase behavior through purchase intention are also significant. The indirect effect of hedonic values (H4) has a path coefficient of 0.429 ($T = 6.823$, $p = 0$), while the indirect effect of utilitarian values (H5) has a path coefficient of 0.625 ($T = 3.895$, $p = 0$). These results suggest that both emotional and practical factors not only influence purchase intention but also indirectly drive actual purchasing behavior. This highlights the mediating role of purchase intention in the consumer decision-making process.

Table 7. Path coefficients.

Paths	Beta	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Results
Hedonic Values -> Purchase Intention	0.554	0.187	7.823	0.00	H1 supported
Utilitarian Values -> Purchase Intention	0.75	0.162	4.64	0.00	H2 supported
Purchase Intention -> Actual Purchase Behavior	0.834	0.092	9.045	0.00	H3 supported
Hedonic Values -> Purchase Intention -> Actual Purchase Behavior	0.429	0.156	6.823	0.00	H4 supported
Utilitarian Values -> Purchase Intention -> Actual Purchase Behavior	0.625	0.161	3.895	0.00	H5 supported

The R-square value (Figure 2) for Purchase Intention is 0.764, which means that approximately 76.4% of the variance in purchase intention is explained by the independent constructs, Hedonic Values and Utilitarian Values. This high R-square value suggests that the combination of emotional (hedonic) and practical (utilitarian) factors plays a significant role in shaping consumers' intentions to purchase Saudi dates. It indicates that the model is highly effective in explaining what drives consumers' purchase intentions.

The R-square value for Actual Purchase Behavior is 0.695, meaning that approximately 69.5% of the variance in actual purchase behavior is explained by Purchase Intention. This high R-square value suggests that purchase intention is a strong predictor of actual purchasing behavior. In other words, consumers who intend to buy Saudi dates are highly likely to follow through with their purchases. This finding underscores the importance of fostering positive purchase intentions to drive real-world consumer behavior.

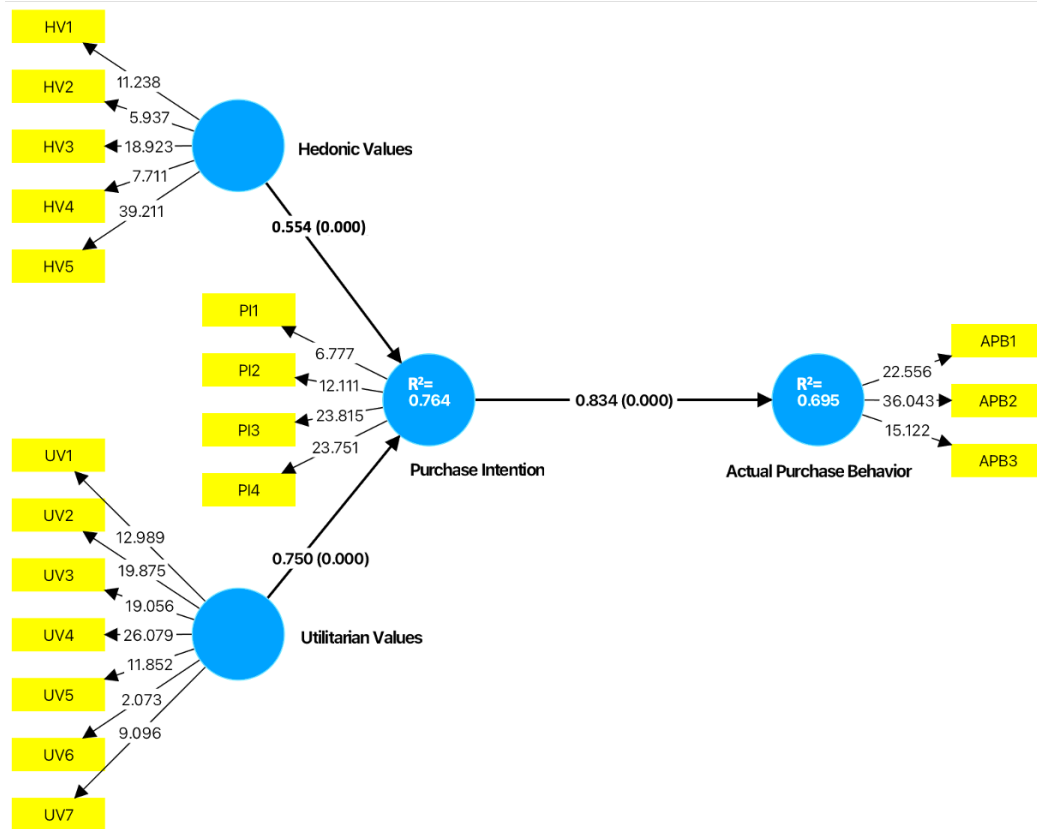


Figure 2. Structural model.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors influencing consumer behavior toward Saudi dates, particularly the roles of hedonic values, utilitarian values, purchase intention, and actual purchase behavior. The study reveals that both hedonic values and utilitarian values significantly influence purchase intention. Hedonic values, which represent the emotional and pleasure-driven aspects of consuming Saudi dates, have a strong positive impact on purchase intention (Beta = 0.554, $p = 0$). This suggests that consumers who associate Saudi dates with pleasure, relaxation, and a sense of well-being are more likely to intend to purchase them. Similarly, utilitarian values, which reflect the practical and functional benefits of Saudi dates, also have a strong positive impact on purchase intention (Beta = 0.75, $p = 0$). This indicates that consumers who perceive Saudi dates as convenient, economical, health-beneficial, and a good alternative to sweets are more likely to intend to purchase them.

The high R-square value for purchase intention (0.764) further underscores the significance of these two constructs in explaining consumer intentions. Together, hedonic and utilitarian values account for approximately 76.4% of the variance in purchase intention, demonstrating their critical role in driving consumer decision-making. This suggests that marketers should focus on both the emotional appeal and practical benefits of Saudi dates to enhance consumer intentions. The study also highlights the strong relationship between purchase intention and actual purchase behavior (Beta = 0.834, $p = 0$). This finding indicates that consumers who intend to purchase Saudi dates are highly likely to follow through with their purchases. The high R-square value for actual purchase behavior (0.695) further confirms that purchase intention is a strong predictor of real-world purchasing behavior, explaining approximately 69.5% of its variance.

The strong link between purchase intention and actual purchase behavior suggests that fostering positive intentions is crucial for driving sales. Marketers should focus on strategies that strengthen consumer intentions, such as emphasizing the emotional and practical benefits of Saudi dates, to encourage actual purchases. The study also examines the indirect effects of hedonic values and utilitarian values on actual purchase behavior through purchase intention. Both indirect effects are significant, with hedonic values

having an indirect effect of 0.429 ($p = 0$) and utilitarian values having an indirect effect of 0.625 ($p = 0$). This indicates that purchase intention acts as a mediator, translating the emotional and practical benefits of Saudi dates into actual purchasing behavior. These findings highlight the importance of addressing both hedonic and utilitarian values to not only influence purchase intention but also drive real-world consumer behavior.

The findings of this study offer significant implications for marketers, businesses, and policymakers aiming to promote Saudi dates and enhance consumer engagement. These implications can be categorized into marketing strategies, product positioning, consumer education, and policy recommendations, each of which can contribute to the growth and success of the Saudi date industry. In terms of marketing strategies, the study highlights the importance of addressing both hedonic values (emotional and pleasure-driven aspects) and utilitarian values (practical and functional benefits). Marketers should adopt a dual approach to appeal to consumers' emotional and practical needs. Campaigns can emphasize the sensory pleasure, cultural significance, and emotional satisfaction of consuming Saudi dates while also highlighting their convenience, affordability, and health benefits. Integrated marketing campaigns that combine emotional storytelling with practical messaging can create a compelling value proposition (El-Habba & Al-Mulhim, 2013). Additionally, leveraging digital platforms, social media influencers, and visually appealing advertisements can help reach a broader audience and strengthen brand appeal. When it comes to product positioning, businesses should differentiate Saudi dates by positioning them as a unique product that offers both emotional satisfaction and practical benefits (Almutawa, 2022). For premium segments, dates can be marketed as a high-quality, culturally significant product with elegant packaging and certifications to assure authenticity. For health-conscious consumers, dates can be positioned as a natural, nutritious, and versatile food option suitable for various diets. Additionally, promoting the convenience of Saudi dates as a ready-to-eat snack or an ingredient in quick recipes can appeal to busy consumers. Pre-packaged date products, such as date bars or spreads, can cater to this segment and enhance product accessibility.

Consumer education is another critical area for driving engagement and purchase behavior. Educating consumers about the nutritional benefits, cultural significance, and versatility of Saudi dates can deepen their appreciation for the product (Alhamdan et al., 2024). Campaigns can focus on the health benefits of dates, such as their high fiber content, antioxidants, and natural sugars, while also sharing stories about their role in Saudi heritage and traditional celebrations. Providing usage ideas, such as recipes or cooking demonstrations, can inspire consumers to incorporate dates into their daily diets. Collaborations with chefs, health experts, or influencers can further enhance credibility and reach.

From a policy perspective, policymakers and industry stakeholders can play a crucial role in promoting Saudi dates by creating an enabling environment for businesses and consumers. Establishing and enforcing quality standards for dates can enhance consumer trust and confidence, while certifications for organic or sustainably sourced products can differentiate Saudi dates in the market. For international markets, policymakers can support businesses through export incentives, trade fairs, and partnerships with foreign distributors. Additionally, promoting sustainable farming practices and communicating the environmental benefits of date cultivation can appeal to eco-conscious consumers and align with global sustainability trends. Finally, businesses should focus on strategies that strengthen purchase intention and facilitate its translation into actual purchase behavior. Loyalty programs, subscription services, and promotions can encourage repeat purchases and build consumer loyalty. Ensuring the widespread availability of Saudi dates in supermarkets, online platforms, and convenience stores can make it easier for consumers to act on their purchase intentions. Limited-time offers, bundle deals, or discounts for bulk purchases can also incentivize consumers to convert their intentions into actual purchases.

6. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing consumer behavior toward Saudi dates, emphasizing the roles of hedonic values, utilitarian values, purchase intention, and actual purchase behavior. The findings reveal that both emotional and practical factors play a critical role in shaping consumer intentions, which in turn strongly predict actual purchasing behavior. The study highlights that hedonic values, such as the pleasure, relaxation, and cultural significance associated with Saudi dates,

significantly influence purchase intention. Similarly, utilitarian values, including the convenience, affordability, and health benefits of dates, also have a strong impact on consumer intentions. Furthermore, the strong link between purchase intention and actual purchase behavior confirms that fostering positive intentions is crucial for driving real-world purchasing decisions. The implications of this study offer actionable insights for marketers, businesses, and policymakers. By adopting a dual approach that appeals to both emotional and practical consumer needs, businesses can create a compelling value proposition for Saudi dates. Effective product positioning, consumer education, and policy support can further enhance the appeal of dates in domestic and international markets. Strategies such as loyalty programs, promotions, and ensuring product accessibility can help translate purchase intentions into actual behavior. This study contributes valuable insights to the literature on consumer behavior and provides practical guidance for promoting Saudi dates. By leveraging the emotional and practical benefits of dates, businesses can strengthen consumer engagement, drive sales, and support the growth of the Saudi date industry. These findings not only benefit the date industry but also offer a framework for understanding consumer behavior in other contexts where both hedonic and utilitarian values play a significant role.

Author Contributions:

Conceptualization: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Data curation: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Formal analysis: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Funding acquisition: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Investigation: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Methodology: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Project administration: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Resources: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Software: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Validation: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Visualization: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Writing – original draft: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.
Writing – review & editing: Mohammad Ali Almushaiti.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Data is available upon request from the authors.

Conflicts of Interest: The author(s) declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- Abbasi, A. Z., Qummar, H., Bashir, S., Aziz, S., & Ting, D. H. (2024). Customer engagement in Saudi food delivery apps through social media marketing: Examining the antecedents and consequences using PLS-SEM and NCA. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 81, 104001. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.104001>
- Abdulalem, M. (2024). Factors influencing young consumers' purchasing behavior toward Saudi coffee products: An application of the extended Theory of Planned Behavior model. *Innovative Marketing*, 20(3), 42-55. [https://doi.org/10.21511/im.20\(3\).2024.04](https://doi.org/10.21511/im.20(3).2024.04)
- Al Falah, K., Al Sughayir, A., & Albarq, A. N. (2024). The importance of environmental concern, trust and convenience in consumers' purchase intentions of organic foods in a developing country. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2361319. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2361319>

- Al-Shreed, F., Al-Jamal, M., Al-Abbad, A., Al-Elaiw, Z., Abdallah, A. B., & Belaifa, H. (2012). A study on the export of Saudi Arabian dates in the global markets. *Journal of Development and Agricultural Economics*, 4(9), 268-274.. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JDAE12.058>
- Alali, B. M., Mosbah, E. B., & Ali, A. (2023). Consumer decision-making and segmentation of dates market in Saudi Arabia. *Italian Journal of Food Science/Rivista Italiana di Scienza degli Alimenti*, 35(3). <https://doi.org/10.15586/ijfs.v35i3.2314>
- AlGeffari, M. A., Almogbel, E. S., Alhomaidan, H. T., El-Mergawi, R., & Barrimah, I. A. (2016). Glycemic indices, glycemic load and glycemic response for seventeen varieties of dates grown in Saudi Arabia. *Annals of Saudi medicine*, 36(6), 397-403. <https://doi.org/10.5144/0256-4947.2016.397>
- Alhamdan, A., Alamri, Y., Aljuhaim, F., Kotb, A., Aljohani, E., Alaagib, S., & Elamshity, M. (2024). Economic Analysis of the Impact of Waste on the Production and Consumption of Dates in Saudi Arabia. *Sustainability*, 16(21), 9588. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16219588>
- Almutawa, A. A. (2022). Date production in the Al-Hassa region, Saudi Arabia in the face of climate change. *Journal of Water and Climate Change*, 13(7), 2627-2647. <https://doi.org/10.2166/wcc.2022.461>
- Alumushaiti, M. A. (2024). Modernizing Saudi Arabia's dates export market via leveraging technology for sustainable growth in the global economy. *International Journal of Integrated Science and Technology*, 2(2), 105–120. <https://doi.org/10.59890/ijist.v2i2.1428>
- Basaran, U., & Buyukyilmaz, O. (2015). The Effects of Utilitarian and Hedonic Values on Young Consumers Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions. *Eurasian Journal of Business and Economics*, 8(16), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.17015/ejbe.2015.016.01>
- El-Habba, M. S., & Al-Mulhim, F. (2013). The competitiveness of the Saudi Arabian date palm: An analytical study. *Afr. J. Agric. Res*, 8(43), 5260-5267.
- Elsabea, A. M. (2012). An economic study of processing problems for the main important varieties of dates in Saudi Arabia. *Annals of Agricultural Sciences*, 57(2), 153-159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aos.2012.08.009>
- Firmansyah, F., Lubis, T. A., & Ningsih, M. (2022). Hedonic value and utilitarian value in food truck business: A qualitative perspective. *Journal of Business Studies and Mangement Review*, 5(2), 221-225. <https://doi.org/10.22437/jbsmr.v5i2.18640>
- Katt, F., & Meixner, O. (2020). Food waste prevention behavior in the context of hedonic and utilitarian shopping value. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 273, 122878. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.122878>
- Mabkhot, H. (2024). Factors affecting millennials' green purchase behavior: Evidence from Saudi Arabia. *Heliyon*, 10(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e25639>
- Maehle, N., Iversen, N., Hem, L., & Otnes, C. (2015). Exploring consumer preferences for hedonic and utilitarian food attributes. *British Food Journal*, 117(12), 3039-3063. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-04-2015-0148>
- Mohammed, A. A. (2021). What motivates consumers to purchase organic food in an emerging market? An empirical study from Saudi Arabia. *British Food Journal*, 123(5), 1758-1775. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-07-2020-0599>
- Pohjanheimo, T., Paasovaara, R., Luomala, H., & Sandell, M. (2010). Food choice motives and bread liking of consumers embracing hedonistic and traditional values. *Appetite*, 54(1), 170-180. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2009.10.004>
- Valesi, R., Andreini, D., & Pedeliento, G. (2024). Insect-based food consumption: Hedonic or utilitarian motives? Moderation and segmentation analyses. *Food Quality and Preference*, 118, 105193. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2024.105193>
- Wichchukit, S., & O'Mahony, M. (2015). The 9-point hedonic scale and hedonic ranking in food science: some reappraisals and alternatives. *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, 95(11), 2167-2178. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jsfa.6993>
- Xin, L., & Seo, S. (2020). The role of consumer ethnocentrism, country image, and subjective knowledge in predicting intention to purchase imported functional foods. *British Food Journal*, 122(2), 448-464.