



Exploring The Determinants of Consumer Preferences in Table Olive Consumption: A Quantitative Market Analysis

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Abstract

This study examined the factors influencing the preferences for table olives among consumers in the Nineveh plains, Iraq. Using a quantitative survey approach, 357 consumers were interviewed to analyze their preferences and perceptions of table olives based on the theory of planned behavior (TPB). A standardized questionnaire was distributed to participants to evaluate their opinions during fieldwork between August 2024 and February 2025. Consumption preferences for olive varieties depend mainly on taste and price, though availability, health benefits, and brand loyalty also have a significant role. The survey revealed that 58.9% of consumers who bought table olives were interested in purchasing from local brands. Additionally, the majority of respondents reported consuming olive products in the afternoon, aiding olive growers and marketers in determining the best time to promote their products. The findings of this study provide the basis for future research in this area and contribute to the existing literature on consumer preferences on the variety of table olives consumed in Iraq. The research shows that cultural factors, together with economic conditions and social elements, influence these preferences. This will allow local producers to enhance the marketability of their products and develop promotional strategies that better align with consumer tastes and needs.

Keywords: Table olives, Brand loyalty, Consumer preferences, Consumption

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Introduction

The olive is one of the most important products in the cuisines and traditions originating in the Mediterranean region, including Iraq. As consumer demand for table olives shifts towards the international market, understanding the factors that influence customer decisions is essential. The identification of consumer preference determinants for table olives serves as a fundamental tool to develop market strategies and enhance product offerings and health benefits, ultimately benefiting both producers and consumers. This study aims at identifying the factors that define consumer choice for table olives, with emphasis on the emerging market of Iraq. According to (5), Spain and Italy are top producers of olives, but even these countries have

observed a decreasing trend in olive consumption (15). Iraqi cuisine relies on table olives as a fundamental ingredient, which also brings various health benefits to consumers. The nutritional value of olives includes healthy fats, antioxidants, and essential vitamins, which contribute to their moderate caloric content that supports dietary balance.

The affordable prices of table olives in the Iraqi market enable low- and middle-income consumers to purchase them, which leads to broad consumption throughout different social classes. The Nineveh region of Iraq produces substantial quantities of table olives for satisfying both domestic and international market demands. The Nineveh plains grow the main olive varieties of Al-Bashiqi, Al-Khastawi, Al-Dahkan, and Al-Nabali. In addition, other varieties are imported from

Spain, such as Al-Manzanillo. However, each type offers distinct taste profiles for different cooking applications. The extensive range of olive production in this area demonstrates how olives play a vital role in both the cultural traditions and economic activities of the region.

The market demand for quality table olives in Iraq remains high because of their cultural value and widespread food usage. Table olives serve as a fundamental ingredient in traditional Iraqi cooking and as a central component during social events and celebrations. Traditional stores known as Torshi not only expand the market by offering a selection of pickled vegetables and fruits alongside table olives but also keep customers engaged. The diverse selection of products keeps customers interested while encouraging them to use olives as a basic ingredient in different recipes. This diverse product selection encourages the use of olives in various recipes, reinforcing their cultural role. However, this situation necessitates a deeper examination of consumer trends, the factors that affect buying decisions, the types of olives preferred, as well as how the olives are used in society. Torshi is a type of pickle that is prepared by fermenting the vegetables and fruits with vinegar, salt, and spices, as mentioned in (46). Some of the vegetables and fruits that are pickled and available in Torshi shops include cucumbers, turnips, beets, carrots, eggplants, lemons, and table olives (4). Such stores are the most common vendors of table olives in the Iraqi market, providing customers with a variety of pickled products that can be used for improving the taste of the meals and the health of people.

The cultural value of table olives in the region makes their study essential because they represent a fundamental part of local eating traditions. The dietary customs and cultural traditions of the region depend heavily on table olives, which makes their consumption patterns vital for studying both local and regional food traditions. The economic value of table olives as a staple product remains substantial because of their widespread consumption. The knowledge of consumer preferences enables producers and retailers to create better products, which leads to improved market success and supports local economic development.

The growing interest in healthy eating among consumers leads to rising demand for nutritious foods, including olives. Research into consumer behavior enables businesses to develop marketing plans that emphasize olive health advantages, which could lead to increased market demand. The olive industry maintains a

key position in trade equilibrium because successful local production of olives for consumer needs leads to economic stability benefits. The analysis of consumption patterns enables stakeholders to develop production plans and discover export possibilities, and create better pricing strategies.

The research into table olives reveals multiple business prospects that exist in the market. It shows how to create unique market positions through health-focused promotions and premium product development. The implementation of this strategy will attract fresh customers while raising total market consumption, which strengthens the economic value of table olives throughout the entire market.

The research problem investigates consumer preference factors for table olives in Iraq's Nineveh region due to the current lack of understanding of what drives these preferences. The cultural value and commercial potential of table olives remain understudied because researchers have not identified the exact elements that shape consumer behavior in this particular market. This lack of understanding about consumer preferences prevents producers and marketers from creating successful strategies that meet their target audience's needs. The main research objective focuses on determining which elements shape Iraqi consumer preferences for table olives, specifically in the Nineveh plain. The research aims to determine which taste preferences, price points, health advantages, and product availability influence consumer buying choices for table olives. The research focuses on addressing four major issues: (1) The elements that determine the purchasing preferences of Iraqi consumers for table olives; (2) How consumer choices on table olives are influenced by social recommendations and established community standards; (3) How consumer behavior toward table olive purchases depends heavily on their commitment to specific brands; and (4) Consumer purchasing decisions and product perception change based on price points and product availability levels.

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is used to evaluate how consumers evaluate table olives through personal assessments of taste and health benefits to determine their purchase intentions. Positive attitudes toward these attributes are likely to lead to higher consumption rates. The study examines how social elements, including friend and family recommendations and traditional olive consumption, affect consumer choices. It investigates how social norms influence the

choice of table olives as the food option and how price levels and product availability affect consumer perceptions of their ability to control their purchasing choices. The belief that olives are easily accessible at reasonable prices will increase the likelihood of consumers adding them to their dietary choices. The study evaluates brand loyalty as a consumer preference factor by analyzing how established brand reputations and consumer trust affect purchasing behavior. TPB is used to develop a complete understanding of table olive consumer preference factors, which will help guide marketing approaches and product creation in the industry (8).

Marketers and product developers can create effective campaigns and designs that appeal to customer preferences and societal traditions, justifying significant economic losses (16). (52) found that consumers often find it challenging to assess intrinsic qualities. As a result, they frequently judge the quality of a product based on the product's origin, culture, and other factors (17). The study of how people, communities, and organizations make decisions about which items or services to acquire, use, or discard is known as consumer preferences (29). It is a marketing sub-discipline that examines the psychological and sociological elements of customer decision-making (36). Consumer preferences research tries to understand why individuals purchase specific products or services and how they make decisions (27). However, in the Nineveh Plains, Western customers tend to prefer table olives over condiments, according to consumer preferences.

To identify the gap, the research attempts to determine how flavor, price, and health benefits significantly influence consumers' preferences for table olives. (53) investigated brand loyalty and customer preferences for table olives in Greece, while (55) evaluated table olive varieties and consumer preferences. (19) studied the effect of price on consumer preference for table olive varieties, while (28) focused on the health benefits of consuming table olives. Similarly, a study (2) on a crop was found not sufficiently remunerative compared to the high production costs in Iraq. Price is an important factor that influences the choice of table olive varieties, while the knowledge of health benefits also plays a role in the buying process. On the other hand, the prices are stable, and inflation-targeting strategies are used to prevent any adverse effects on economic activity

(35, 30). However, none of the studies has considered the effect of brand loyalty and availability on consumers' preferences for table olives.

As such, the key focus of this study is to identify the factors that influence consumers' choices and behaviors. These factors may influence their choices by seeing (49) how consumers use the different types of table olives and identifying. Further, the research findings will also help olive growers and marketers to understand the needs and desires of the Iraqi consumer.

Literature and Hypotheses Development

Table olives are a widely consumed snack food. According to a survey from the early 2000s, consumers prefer green olives to black olives, though regional preferences might vary (56). Similarly, (51) noted that consumers prefer olives with a milder flavor and those with higher oil content; thus, taste is another factor when choosing a particular type of table olive. Also, price, packaging, texture, saltiness, and origin are additional factors that affect consumer preferences for table olives (42). In contrast, (10) mentioned the adjective bitterness describes the bitter taste experienced by the sense of taste when consuming a food product.

(47) indicated that each of these traits can have a significant impact on consumers' choice of variety and overall consumption. (33) stated that price will probably also have a significant impact on this decision-making process. Consumers could have trouble locating the goods they want if a variety is not readily accessible (12). (45) examined consumer preferences for several table olive varieties and how taste highly affects such choices. (14) found that Andalusian consumers have distinct tastes for several varieties of table olives. Taste, of course, influences consumer choices, but there are other considerations as well, such as claimed health benefits.

H1: Consumers' preferences for table olives are largely determined by taste.

(32) investigated how pricing influences consumer preferences for several varieties of table olives. (22) showed that the label of table olives affected price sensitivity significantly. Price sensitivity increases with co-branded label alternatives, whereas it decreases with unbranded label options. Furthermore, consumers' gender, income level, and store type had a significant impact on price sensitivity (31). Consumers are increasingly choosing a product based on price as they

become more aware of the necessity of budgeting when it comes to supermarket shopping. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that price has a significant impact on consumer table olive preferences.

H2: Price is an important factor that affects consumers' preferences for table olives.

(7) highlighted consumer preferences such as availability, color, flavor, texture, and pricing. (1) mentioned several factors that affect consumer preferences, like health concerns, geographical variances, and age. (38) suggested that exceptional olives should be selected using two methods: traditional selection techniques and current scientific methodologies. When it comes to olives, consumers have more options, ranging from black to green to various flavored varieties. Therefore, the availability of marketable olives may determine consumer preferences.

H3: The availability of different table olives in the market affects consumer preferences.

Another aspect of this study will explore the health benefits of eating table olives. As per the study findings, eating table olives may have benefits for heart disease, diabetes, and inflammatory disorders, as well as general well-being (39). (20) found evidence of health benefits by linking the polyphenols in table olives to lower oxidative stress, better blood pressure, improved immune system performance, and greater antioxidant capacity. Also, (11) noted that eating table olives offers several health benefits. The authors stress that eating table olives daily can help with general health and well-being.

H4: Consumers may also be influenced by the health benefits associated with consuming certain table olives.

(53) investigated brand loyalty and consumer preferences for Greek table olives, showing that brand loyalty had a negative relationship with consumer preference and was the key factor influencing consumers' buying behavior. Also, (3) found that brand loyalty and consumer preferences have a significant impact on the willingness to buy table olives in Iran. However, the awareness of a certain brand may make consumers want to try out different types of olives, especially if they are being bought for a specific event. For instance, if an individual or a family buys a particular type of olive to consume at home, they may be likely to purchase the same type of olive again in the future. Thus, this could foster consumer loyalty to a particular brand.

H5: Consumer preference can be affected by brand loyalty for table olives.

There may be certain olive varieties that are preferred in certain countries due to cultural or religious reasons (40). Also, it explained how marketing techniques are employed to alter consumers' buying behavior and make them more aware of the table olives (41). Finally, (50) found out that promotional strategies such as stocking of products in shops and advertising could influence consumers' preferences for different kinds of table olives. The findings show that the marketing strategies used to enhance consumer awareness of the different types of table olives may be effective and could influence consumer buying behavior.

The literature review section demonstrates why this research matters through its evaluation of existing studies about table olive consumer preference determinants. The research investigates how different elements affect consumer behavior in the Nineveh plains of Iraq through a comprehensive analysis of taste and price and availability and health benefits and brand loyalty.

Similarities and Differences with Previous Studies: The study confirms that taste and price and health benefits remain essential factors for consumer preference formation according to research by (56), (51), and (42). The three elements of taste, price, and health benefits have proven essential for consumer preference formation across different cultural settings including Spanish and Greek markets. The research distinguishes itself from other studies by investigating the Iraqi market while studying how Iraqi social-economic conditions and cultural traditions influence purchasing decisions. It investigates how taste and price and availability and health benefits and brand loyalty interact with each other to understand consumer preferences in a comprehensive manner.

The research extends current knowledge about table olive consumer preferences through its focus on the Iraqi market while adding depth to the understanding of multiple factors that drive consumer choices. It provides complete information which aids producers and marketers develop effective marketing strategies that appeal to local consumers.

Materials and Methods

Quantitative data was collected through focus group discussions with farmers, consumers, and other stakeholders such as the owners of Torshi shops, table olive retailers, and olive experts. (43) focused on the stakeholders who could have the potential to impact corporate environmental actions. The interviews were conducted in person using a self-designed questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and thematic analysis by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Furthermore, a quantitative survey was used to examine the preferences of table olive consumers. Fieldwork was conducted between August 2024 and February 2025 using a non-probability convenience sample covering 385 individuals, of which 357 samples were returned, giving a return rate of 92.27%. The survey was conducted in Arabic and English to ensure diverse participation.

The study collected data on 42 items. Demographic variables were measured with 5 items, but not included to reliability test, taste and price with 6 items each, availability and brand loyalty with 10 items each, and health benefits with 6 items. These factors help explain how consumers perceive products and brands (23, 9). Finally, four items were employed to measure consumption for evaluating how many table olives individuals buy and consume. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Results and Discussion

The descriptive analysis of a sample population of 357 individuals revealed 60.2% who were aged 25-44, with the majority being male (67.2%) and Muslim

(77.9%). Most were married (71.7%), did not complete secondary school 28.6%, and were full-time employees (38.9%) or self-employed (33.1%). However, the analysis does not provide information on the relationship between demographic characteristics and consumer preferences regarding table olive consumption. Figure 2 shows the customers in the Nineveh plains are primarily loyal consumers of local olives, according to a study. However, 250 respondents consider themselves loyal consumers, while 100 do not. The majority of respondents preferred quality when purchasing olive products, with 317 prioritizing it over price. This can better aid Iraqi olive growers and marketers in meeting the demands and preferences of their target audience. This information could aid in understanding the preferences of local olive consumers.

Analysis of olive purchase quantities: The data shows that of the 357 olives consumers, 52.4% purchased half a kilogram, 20.4% one kilogram, 8.7% two kilograms, 7.6% three kilograms, and 10.9% four kilograms. Most chose to buy small quantities of olives to save money and have enough space for storage. The low demand for big olive purchases shows that people tend to buy olives only when they need them because of financial reasons and traditional eating habits.

The greater health consciousness among consumers leads them to purchase small amounts of new products because they want to experience their taste and quality before making larger purchases. The health advantages of olives should be highlighted by producers to motivate customers to purchase more of them. The market requires marketing efforts that combine health-focused promotions with affordable prices to attract budget-conscious consumers and expand the market.

Table 1. Measurement description

Variables.	Codes	Items = N 357	Overall Mean	Overall SD
Taste	T1	The priorities from the following options?	3.731	1.322
	T2	Which taste profile most accurately characterizes your hobby?		
	T3	If you had to describe a local Al-Bashiqi olive to a friend,		
	T4	On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the importance of taste?		
	T5	How can olive producers produce varieties that satisfy their customers' tastes?		
	T6	The key reasons that motivate you to consume table olives?		
Price	P1	Optimistic or pessimistic about olive production?	2.337	0.938
	P2	Planning to buy olives from your farmer relatives.		
	P3	What kind of olive product do people buy most often?		
	P4	What price do you think the olive product is expensive when you buy it?		
	P5	How willing are you to pay for a kilogram of olive product?		
	P6	How would you feel if you could no longer buy local olives?		
Availability	A1	Your concerned about climate change and its impact on the olive producer?	2.388	0.881
	A2	The last quantity of olives you purchased (in kilograms)?		
	A3	Usually find the olive product (type of olive)		
	A4	There is no doubt that the needs of the community of local olives are available.		
	A5	Times a week do you buy olive products?		
	A6	I like to go the long way to get olives.		
	A7	The relationship of your site with other nearby sites (i.e., the sites where the olives are located: Bashiqi, for example)?		
	A8	The importance of your site change over time?		
	A9	Do you see evidence of exploitation of natural resources in your area? (eg farmland)		
	A10	The availability of table olives influences your decision to consume them?		
Health Benefits	HB1	Buying olives because of the health benefits.	2.554	0.812
	HB2	The following times of the day do you consume the olive product?		
	HB3	Ever boycotted an olive product because of a bad experience?		
	HB4	The examples of human-environment interaction that you see in your area?		
	HB5	Why do you buy olives?		
	HB6	Would you be more likely to consume table olives?		
Brand Loyalty	BL1	Pay most attention to when buying an olive product?	2.370	0.700
	BL2	Usually buy olive products from?		
	BL3	Recognizing any local olive product name?		
	BL4	Describe your satisfaction with where you live physically?		
	BL5	Which of the following options applies to you?		
	BL6	What kind of customer do you represent yourself?		
	BL7	Which of the following purchasing patterns applies to you as a customer?		
	BL8	Do you consider yourself a loyal customer of local olives?		
	BL9	Would you consider switching to a different brand?		
	BL10	Would you be open to trying new brands?		

Framework model

The research framework model offers a comprehensive approach to understanding consumer preferences of table olive consumption. The study can offer significant perspectives for olive growers and marketers. However, to describe the study variables, the following study has been determined: Consumers can enjoy different flavors, textures, and aromas from different varieties of olives (45). Consumers are more likely to purchase low-cost olives than expensive ones (

48). The market availability of various table olives influences consumer preferences. If specific types are not accessible on the market, consumers may choose other varieties. The health benefits of consuming particular table olive varieties may also have an impact on consumers. Olives, for instance, contain antioxidants and polyphenols that can lower the risk of certain diseases and improve health (20). Positive brand experiences or trust in its quality and flavor may motivate consumers to purchase it (21).

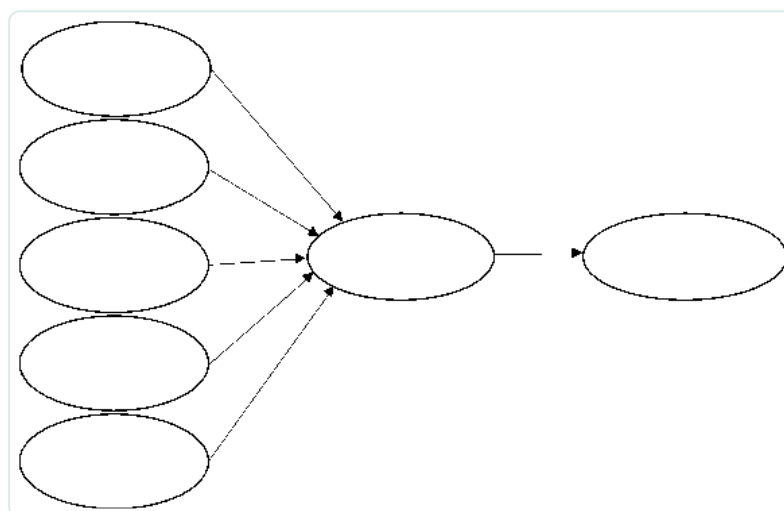


Figure 1. Model of factors affecting consumption

The relationships depicted in **Fig. 1** relate to the letters (a, b, c, d, e) directly within the figure. These represent the coefficients that quantify the strength of the relationships between each factor and consumer preferences. Specifically, the coefficients indicate how much each factor contributes to shaping consumer behavior:

- Taste (0.662): Reflects the strong influence of flavor and quality on consumer choices, as consumers enjoy different flavors, textures, and aromas from various olive varieties.
- Price (0.740): Indicates that consumers tend to prefer olives that are more affordable, reinforcing the idea that they are more likely to purchase low-cost rather than expensive olives.

- Availability (0.750): Demonstrates the importance of market access to various olive types in shaping preferences; if specific types are not available, consumers may choose alternatives.
- Health Benefits (0.759): Highlights the impact of perceived health advantages associated with different varieties of olives, including antioxidants and polyphenols that can lower the risk of certain diseases and improve health.
- Brand Loyalty (0.771): Shows the role of consumer trust and previous brand experiences in purchasing decisions, emphasizing that positive brand experiences can motivate consumers to purchase.

The overall model explains 59.5% of the variance in consumption behavior, underscoring the significant role these factors play in influencing consumer preferences.

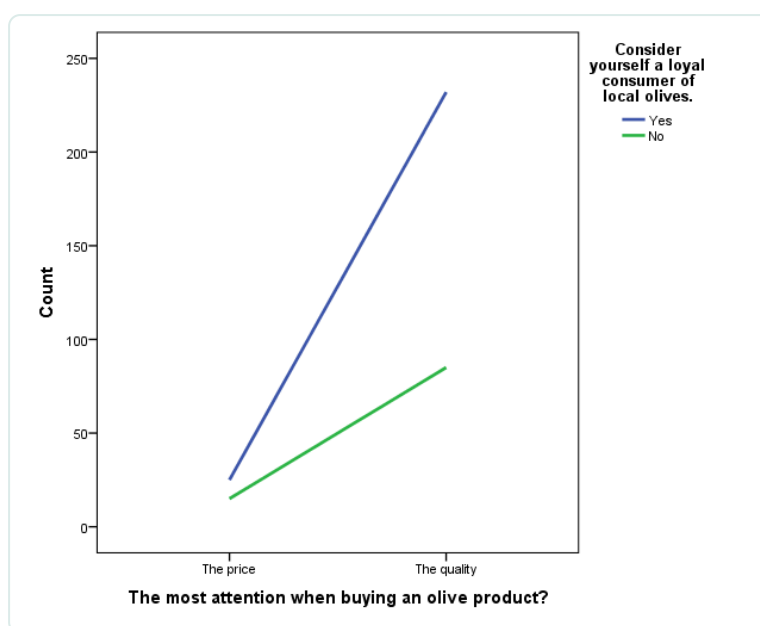


Figure 2. Consumer loyalty to local olives

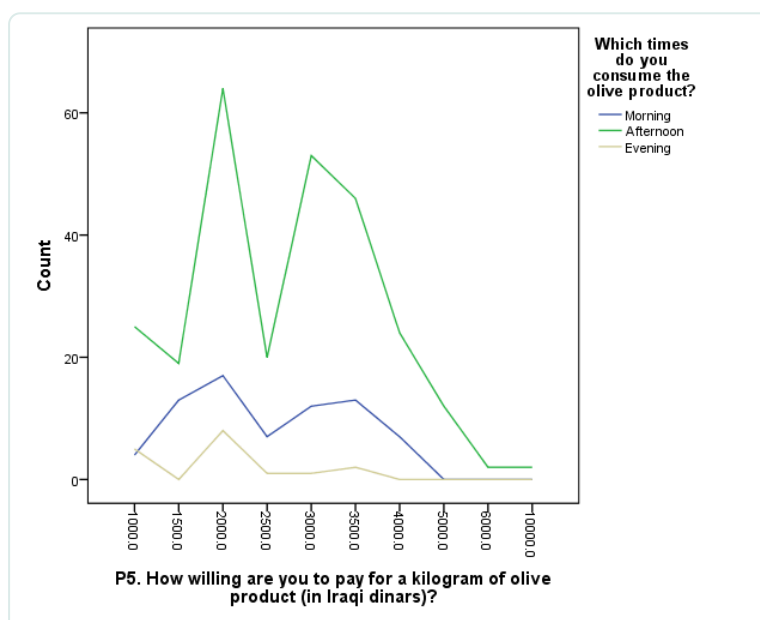


Figure 3. Olives consumption

Figure 3 illustrates that the Bashiqa District in Iraq has a significant olive product market, with the majority of respondents consuming olives in the afternoon and morning. The data suggests that olive growers and marketers should focus on advertising during these times to increase consumption and promote health benefits. The most frequent price point for a kilogram of olive products is 2000 Iraqi dinars, followed by 3000 and 3500 dinars. The findings could help determine the best price for their goods in the Iraqi market. (26) also revealed monetary derivatives that could significantly influence

table olive consumption in the Iraqi market. Therefore, producers should focus on advertising during these times to increase consumption and promote health benefits.

Consistency in measurement

The study's reliability statistics test showed high internal consistency in the questionnaire, with Cronbach's Alpha at .883, surpassing the universally recognized standard of 0.7 (34). This ensures reliability across diverse respondents, facilitating comparisons.

The proportion of variance in variables

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy was .827, advising an adequate sample size for factor analysis. The correlation matrix of variables was

found to be appropriate, indicating sufficient correlation for component analysis; both tests are in the appendix.

Model Summary of Stepwise Regression Method

Table 2. Consumer preferences in table olive consumption

Model	R	R ²	AR ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R ² Ch.	F Ch.	df1	df2	Sig. F Ch.
1	.662 ^a	.438	.436	.94256	.438	276.719	1	355	.000
2	.740 ^b	.547	.545	.84727	.109	85.344	1	354	.000
3	.750 ^c	.562	.558	.83471	.015	11.734	1	353	.001
4	.759 ^d	.576	.571	.82218	.014	11.836	1	352	.001
5	.771 ^e	.595	.589	.80487	.019	16.308	1	351	.000

Model Summary of Enter Regression Method

Table 3.1. Consumer preferences in table olive consumption

Table 2.1: Consumer preferences in table olive consumption									
Model	R	R ²	AR ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
R ² Ch.	F Ch.	df1	df2	Sig. F Ch.					
1	.771 ^a	.595	.589	.80487	.595	103.069	5	351	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Taste, Price, Availability, Health Benefits, Brand Loyalty.

The stepwise regression analysis indicates a progressive enhancement in the relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable, consumer preferences for table olives. The R-value increased from 0.662 in Model 1 to 0.771 in Model 5, demonstrating a strong positive correlation as additional predictors were introduced. This progression reflects the increasing explanatory power of the model, culminating in an R² value of 0.595, which signifies that approximately 59.5% of the variance in consumer preferences can be accounted for by the independent variables included in the final model.

Interpretation of R² Values

The final model from the stepwise regression analysis yields an R² value of 0.595, indicating that approximately 59.5% of the variance in consumer preferences for table olives is explained by the predictors: taste, price, availability, health benefits, and brand loyalty. While this R² value is considered reasonably good, it is essential to contextualize its adequacy in relation to the specific research objectives and the nature of the dataset. In terms of robustness, an R² value above 0.5 is generally accepted as indicating a

moderate level of explanatory power. However, the adequacy of this value can depend on the complexity of the phenomenon being studied and the expectations within the specific field of research. Thus, while 0.595 suggests a meaningful relationship, it also implies that additional factors outside the model may influence consumer preferences, warranting further investigation.

Comparison with ENTER Regression Method

In contrast, the ENTER regression method also results in an R² value of 0.595, with the same predictors included in the model simultaneously. This method allows an assessment of the overall contribution of all variables at once, providing a comprehensive view of their joint effects on consumer preferences.

Model Specification:

Stepwise Regression: Introduces variables incrementally, focusing on their individual contributions and adjusting the model based on statistical significance at each step. This method can lead to different variable selection outcomes based on the sample data, potentially resulting in a model that may not generalize well to other populations.

ENTER Regression: Includes all predictors in the model at once, which maintains the integrity of relationships among the variables. This approach allows

for evaluation of the simultaneous impact of all factors and helps to mitigate the risk of overfitting that can occur in stepwise regression.

Stepwise Coefficient Method

Table 4. Significance of the consumption in consumer preferences

Model	Un. Coefficients		S. Coeff.	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-.319	.278		-1.148	.252		
Taste	.438	.036	.464	12.082	.000	.782	1.279
Price	.395	.044	.337	8.956	.000	.817	1.224
Availability	.218	.058	.131	3.788	.000	.959	1.043
Health Benefits	-.193	.042	-.164	-4.562	.000	.897	1.115
Brand Loyalty	.161	.040	.153	4.038	.000	.806	1.240
a. Dependent Variable: Consumption							

ENTER Coefficient Method

Table 5.1. Significance of the consumption in the consumer preferences

Table 3.1: Significance of the consumption in the consumer preferences								
Model		Un. Coefficients		S. Coeff.	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
B	Std. Error	Beta	Tolerance	VIF				
(Constant)		-.319	.278		-1.148	.252		
Taste		.218	.058	.131	3.788	.000	.959	1.043
Price		-.193	.042	-.164	-4.562	.000	.897	1.115
Availability		.161	.040	.153	4.038	.000	.806	1.240
Health Benefits		.438	.036	.464	12.082	.000	.782	1.279
Brand Loyalty		.395	.044	.337	8.956	.000	.817	1.224
a. Dependent Variable: Consumption								

Explanation and Discussion of Regression Coefficients

The coefficient test results for Model 5 (Stepwise Method, Table 3) and the Enter Method (Table 3.1) show that all independent variables significantly influence the dependent variable, consumption of table olives.

Stepwise Coefficient Method vs. Enter Coefficient Method

In examining the influence of taste on consumption, the Stepwise Method reveals a strong coefficient of $\beta = 0.438$, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a pronounced effect when considered in isolation. In contrast, the Enter Method presents a lower coefficient of $\beta = 0.218$, also with a p-value of 0.000. This difference suggests that

while taste is a significant factor in both analyses, its impact appears moderated by other variables when all are evaluated together in the Enter Method.

Regarding price, the Stepwise Method indicates a positive relationship with consumption, yielding a coefficient of $\beta = 0.395$ and a p-value of 0.000. This finding is surprising, as it implies that consumers might associate higher prices with better quality or exclusivity. However, the Enter Method presents a negative coefficient of $\beta = -0.193$, which contradicts the typical expectation that increasing prices would lead to decreased consumption. This discrepancy underscores the critical importance of model selection and the inclusion of variables: the Stepwise Method provides a

more focused analysis, while the Enter Method reveals the simultaneous effects of all predictors, potentially highlighting different dynamics.

Finally, the analysis of health benefits shows a negative relationship in the Stepwise Method, with a coefficient of $\beta = -0.193$ and a p-value of 0.000. This raises concerns about consumers' perceived value of health benefits, suggesting that these factors may not be prioritized in purchasing decisions. Conversely, the Enter Method indicates a positive coefficient of $\beta = 0.438$, suggesting that health benefits are indeed valued. However, this impact may be overshadowed by other factors such as taste and price when all predictors are assessed together. This inconsistency emphasizes the need for further exploration into how consumers perceive health benefits in relation to other influencing factors.

Coefficients and Significance:

In the stepwise regression, the coefficients indicate the individual contributions of each predictor. For example, taste has a strong positive effect on consumer preferences ($\beta = 0.438$), while health benefits show a negative effect ($\beta = -0.193$).

In the ENTER regression, the coefficients reflect the same relationships but consider the variables in a simultaneous context. This can provide a more accurate representation of how each predictor interacts with others.

Collinearity Statistics:

Both models report variance inflation factors (VIF) that indicate the presence of multicollinearity among predictors. Both show acceptable VIF values (all below 5), suggesting that multicollinearity is not a significant concern.

Finally, both the stepwise and ENTER regression methods yield an R^2 value of 0.595, indicating a moderate explanatory power for the predictors in

understanding consumer preferences for table olives. However, the ENTER method provides a more holistic view of the relationships among all variables, reducing the risks associated with overfitting and variable selection biases inherent in stepwise regression.

Implications of Findings

Price and Consumption: The positive relationship between price and consumption observed in the Stepwise Method may indicate that consumers view higher prices as indicative of quality. However, the Enter Method suggests that when evaluated alongside other factors, price may not be a strong driver of consumption. This highlights the complexity of consumer behavior. **Health Benefits:** The contrasting results regarding health benefits emphasize the necessity of effectively communicating the value of these benefits to consumers. In both methods, the relationship is significant, but the direction and strength vary significantly. This inconsistency suggests that further research is required to understand consumer attitudes towards health benefits in the context of price and taste.

In summary, while both the Stepwise and Enter regression methods provide valuable insights into the factors influencing consumer preferences for table olives, the discrepancies between the results underscore the importance of model selection. The Stepwise Method reveals the strong influence of taste and a potential market perception of price, while the Enter Method highlights the complexity of interrelationships among all variables. These findings can inform marketing strategies, suggesting that emphasizing quality in conjunction with health benefits may enhance consumer appeal. Future research should further explore these dynamics to align product offerings with consumer expectations and preferences.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 6. Hypotheses analysis

	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	L	U	Accepted//Rejected×
H ₁ Taste	94.927	356	.000	3.79832	3.7196	3.8770	√
H ₂ Price	58.950	356	.000	3.32493	3.2140	3.4359	√
H ₃ Availability	60.438	356	.000	3.81793	3.6937	3.9422	√
H ₄ Health Benefits	45.903	356	.000	3.22969	3.0913	3.3681	√
H ₅ Brand Loyalty	64.920	356	.000	3.67227	3.5610	3.7835	√

The study uses one-sample t-tests to test five hypotheses, revealing significant differences between the sample and population mean. The t-value is high, indicating significant differences. All hypotheses are accepted, and the confidence interval includes the difference with 95% certainty. The findings show that each factor significantly impacts consumer preferences for olive consumption.

Discussion: The research concentrated on factors that affect the consumption of olives. The same can be said for investigations conducted by (6, 44), where flavor, texture, color, aroma, and price were identified as the key factors that shaped consumers' choice of table olives. The findings indicate that taste is the most important factor affecting consumers' choice of table olives; they prefer those that are sweet, mild, and have a good texture. Other factors that also play a role include the price of table olives, where consumers will only buy table olives if they are affordable (37). The same way that availability and local processing practices affect the consumers' choices. However, the research reveals a clear preference for Al-Bashiqi at 65.8%, and Al-Dahkan at 34.2% as olive product names, with no acknowledgment of other tested names. This demonstrates the survey participants' high proportion of familiarity with these two specific olive product names.

The findings indicate that factors may contribute to the popularity of Al-Bashiqi and Al-Dahkan types as regional names for olive products. This suggests an opportunity to develop new names for olive products, but these names should consider local preferences and cultural backgrounds.

The results indicate that taste and price are the most significant factors determining consumer preferences toward consumption, along with availability, health benefits, and brand loyalty. In contrast to a study by (25), environmental effects have a significant impact on consumer preferences. The independent variables have a strong positive association of 77.1% with an effectiveness of 58.9% on consumption, based on regression analysis. However, consumers who value the taste of table olives, particularly those with specific flavor profiles like mild, tangy, or salty, are more likely to purchase reasonably priced, good-value table olives. The study found that taste, price, availability, health benefits, and brand loyalty significantly influence consumers' preferences for table olive varieties, with R^2

values ranging from 43.8% to 59.5%. The second hypothesis suggests that pricing affects consumer preferences for table olive types.

In line with the findings, pricing explains 54.7% of the variation in consumer preferences. Research indicates that price significantly influences consumer decisions when purchasing olive products, with consumers willing to pay more for higher-quality, extra-benefit products. For instance, (13) found that a price advantage affects the consumer preferences of olive goods. Similarly, (24) discovered that consumers were prepared to pay a higher price for natural olives. (54) also found that purchasing fair-trade olive goods in Italy was highly connected to price satisfaction.

The study reveals that (H4) health benefits of table olives significantly influence consumer preferences, accounting for 57.6% of the variation. These benefits may also influence purchasing decisions, which in turn may help olive traders in enhancing the sales of healthy and local olives. For instance, (18) found brand loyalty as one of the major factors that influence consumer choice of olive products. The findings of this study hold significance for the Iraqi olive growers and marketers, as they will be able to apply this information for developing better marketing strategies that would be in line with the consumer's requirements and preferences. This implies that the producers should endeavor to improve on the taste of the table olives they produce and ensure that they are within the affordable range of 2000 IQD and above and should also ensure that they market the health benefits of consuming their products. They can also try their best to enhance their brand awareness and identity in the market through proper branding and advertising.

The research results demonstrate that consumers tend to buy half a kilogram of olives, at 52.4%, and one kilogram, at 20.4%, because they prefer smaller quantities. The study results match the literature, which shows that price stands as a main factor that affects consumer choices in markets where customers focus on budget-friendly options. The literature fails to provide detailed information about why consumers avoid purchasing large quantities of table olives despite their cultural importance in Iraq. The market shows minimal interest in two-kilogram purchases at 8.7% because customers tend to buy only what they need, which stems from economic factors and traditional consumption patterns.

One significant limitation of this study was the relatively small sample size, as it included only 357 respondents. This sample may not have adequately represented the target population, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. The research primarily focused on consumer preferences, which introduces potential bias and may not capture the broader context of table olive consumption. Consequently, the results may not be generalizable to other demographic groups or settings. Future studies should address these limitations by using larger, more diverse samples and more effective methods for measuring consumption patterns.

Research implications

Marketing Strategies

1. The marketing industry can use consumer attitude data to create specific advertising campaigns that emphasize table olive attributes such as health advantages and flavor profiles.

2. The market positioning of companies depends on brand loyalty research, leading to the development of loyalty programs and promotional strategies that strengthen positive consumer perceptions.

Product Development

1. The development of new table olive varieties and flavors should be considered by producers because consumers show a preference for taste and health benefits.

2. The production of high-quality olives at competitive prices should be the main focus of producers who value price and quality factors.

Consumer Education

1. The research data can guide awareness programs that educate people about table olive health advantages to change their attitudes and boost market demand.

2. The cultural importance of olives in Iraqi cuisine should be promoted to consumers because this approach will increase their interest and appreciation, leading to higher consumption rates.

Policy Recommendations

1. The research results should motivate government officials to provide financial backing to local olive farmers through grants and subsidies, which will strengthen the domestic olive industry.

2. The research findings will help create quality standards for table olives, which will provide consumers with access to premium products.

Conclusion

This study identifies which independent variables affect Iraqi consumers' decisions when selecting table olives for purchase. The theory of planned behavior shows that consumer choices result from a combination of attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control. The research demonstrates that table olives hold deep cultural value in Iraq because they serve as essential components of social gatherings and everyday meals. The rising interest in health-conscious eating creates a major business opportunity. The growing demand among health-conscious consumers can be met through producer efforts to promote the nutritional value of table olives.

The research shows that consumer preferences depend on five independent factors, namely taste preferences, price sensitivity, product availability, health benefits, and brand recognition. It delivers actionable recommendations to marketers and producers through advertising, product development, and consumer education initiatives. The table olive industry can achieve greater sustainability through stakeholder efforts to enhance its vibrancy by supporting local producers. The research provides valuable insights into consumer preferences while establishing a strategic approach for building a profitable table olive market which benefits both customers and producers.

Supplementary Materials: Appendix A outlines the demographic characteristics of the 357 valid participants. Appendix B shows strong awareness of local olive product names among the participants. Appendix C confirms the questionnaire's high internal consistency through reliability statistics. Appendix D indicates a KMO measure above 0.6, ensuring an adequate sample size for analysis. Appendix E reveals significant associations from ANOVA between taste, price, availability, health benefits, brand loyalty, and consumption. Additionally, Figure A illustrates the types of olives studied, while Figure B recodes variables related to olive attributes. These materials provide valuable context and support for the research findings.

Author Contributions: The project conception was by Author 1. Both authors were responsible for data collection and formal analysis. Author 1 played a key role in conducting surveys and interviews. The tasks of writing, reviewing, and editing were undertaken by both authors. Author 1 was accountable for the composition and finalization of the written work, specifically in terms of preparing the original draft. Author 2 was responsible for the literature review and research design for the study, as well as formulating the hypotheses, research methodology, and analyzing the theoretical implications of the findings. Author 1 was responsible for supervision.

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مقالة أصيلة

استكشاف العوامل المحددة لتفضيلات المستهلكين في استهلاك زيتون المائدة: تحليل كمي للسوق

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الخلاصة

تدرس هذه الدراسة العوامل المؤثرة على تفضيلات المستهلكين لزيتون المائدة في سهل نينوى بالعراق. أجريت مقابلات مع 357 مستهلكًا باستخدام نهج كمي. تطبق الدراسة أساليب المسح الكمي القائمة على نظرية السلوك المخطط (TPB) لتحليل تفضيلات المستهلكين وتصوراتهم حول زيتون المائدة. وزع الباحثون استبيانًا موحدًا على المشاركين الذين أكملوه لتقييم آرائهم. تم العمل الميداني بين أغسطس 2024 وفبراير 2025. تعتمد تفضيلات الاستهلاك فيما يتعلق بأنصاف الزيتون بشكل أساسي على المذاق والسعر، ولكن التوافر والفوائد الصحية والولاء للعلامة التجارية تلعب أيضًا دورًا مهمًا. كشف الاستطلاع أن 58.9% من المستهلكين الذين اشتروا زيتون المائدة كانوا مهتمين بالشراء من العلامات التجارية المحلية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، أفاد غالبية المشاركين، 49.9%، باستهلاك منتجات الزيتون في فترة ما بعد الظهر، مما يساعد مزارعي الزيتون والمسوقين في تحديد أفضل وقت للترويج لمنتجاتهم. تُشكل نتائج هذه الدراسة أساسًا لبحوث مستقبلية في هذا المجال، وتسهم في تعزيز الدراسات الحالية حول تفضيلات المستهلكين فيما يتعلق بأنواع زيتون المائدة المستهلكة في العراق. ويُظهر البحث كيف تؤثر العوامل الثقافية، إلى جانب الظروف الاقتصادية والاجتماعية، على هذه التفضيلات. ويمكن للمنتجين المحليين تعزيز تسويق منتجاتهم وتطوير استراتيجيات ترويجية تلبي أذواق المستهلكين واحتياجاتهم بشكل أفضل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: زيتون المائدة، ولاء العلامة التجارية، تفضيلات المستهلكين، الاستهلاك