

FACTORS OF CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

Since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic hit across the globe, people become more aware about health and hygiene conditions. People are advised to wear proper masks and pay extra attention to each owns hygienic upkeep. Hand sanitation has become an alternative to handwashing due to its convenience and effectivity. This paper studies the effects of Subjective Norms on consumers' Purchase Intention toward hand sanitizer in Malaysian setting. From a comprehensive literature study, this paper provides a general concept and process execution of the survey. Data collection involves a set of online questionnaire distribution across Malaysian consumers. Data analysis utilizes Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software using statistical techniques such as ANOVA. This paper is an approach beneficial to the medical industry in order to produce high quality products.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Corona Virus Disease 2019, officially declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) as SARS-COV-2 virus disease, is commonly known these days as COVID-19. The virus spread quickly as a major threat across the globe, including Southeast Asian countries (Harapan et al., 2020). The death rate increased significantly among the elderlies and those who have more than one disease present at the same time related to cardiovascular, kidney, respiratory, hypertension, and cancer (Verity et al., 2020; Wu & McGoogan, 2020). With information regularly circulated across the internet about healthcare staff who fell victim to COVID-19, people became more concerned. A study in Indonesia proved that level of concern affects awareness which then leads to behaviors of risk mitigation and improving towards a healthy lifestyle (Hidayat et al., 2021). Since the COVID-19 is an airborne-disease, it develops fear when people have to carry out activities outside the home (Hidayat et al., 2021).

During the health crisis, governments took safety measures to prevent the widespread of COVID-19, one of it by implementing Movement Control Order (MKN, 2020). Consumers' behavior on purchasing had shifted and created opportunities for online businesses. (Ait Youssef et al., 2020) Due to the effect of the pandemic, physical bookstores is one of the businesses that took a heavy blow and had to resort

for closure and exert efforts to market online (H. V. Nguyen et al., 2020).

Health, defined by WHO (1948), is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Health as a value has many motivational meanings, and is linked to healthy behaviors (Dobewall et al., 2018). People who value their health are more likely to take actions that are proactively health-minded, including buying (Hidayat et al., 2021).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the marketing trend towards health care products has increased (Hidayat et al., 2021). Researchers deduce that it is essential to have a travel kit in this COVID-19 pandemic composed of face mask, hand sanitizer, and thermometer strip (Ngali et al., 2021).

Healthy hand sanitation is now becoming a more integrated solution to handwashing as part of consumer hygiene practices (Berardi et al., 2020; Hidayat et al., 2021).

A study was performed in Indonesia considering health value, attitude, and subjective norm as factors towards purchase intention of hand sanitizers. Most of the respondents viewed that health is everything, and that it is important to avoid from catching any disease and to protect their health. Results indicated preference for an improvement in the aspect of product's comfort and the respondents' positive purchase intention was led by social pressure from

family and friends to buy hand sanitizer. (Hidayat et al., 2021)
 Google Analytics in between February and March 2020 showed an increase in shopping online for hygienical products such as hand sanitizers (Hidayat et al., 2021). An extensive research on hand sanitizer purchase intention among Malaysians will be beneficial for manufacturers and business firms that capitalize on the supply of hand sanitizer.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Many previous studies were done in other countries regarding purchase intention of essential/non-essential products during the pandemic of COVID-19, but not much filled the gap in the scope of Malaysian population.

This paper considers the motivation of purchasing intention on the hand sanitizer as an integrated solution to hand washing.

The aim of this study is to determine the effect of personal attitude and perceived social pressure as the subjective norms among consumers towards purchase intention of hand sanitizer in Malaysia since the hit of COVID-19 pandemic.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will explain the variables used in this research.

3.1 Purchase Intention

Purchasing intention refers to the attitude toward a specific purchasing behavior and the degree of willingness to pay (Zhang et al., 2020). Ateke & James (2018) identified purchase intention as the susceptibility to do business with a brand. Business firms study about purchase intention because it points potential customers' preference for a specific product in a product category, which links to the potential of yielding profit.

3.2 Subjective Norm

Hidayat et al. (2021) defined subjective norms as the belief that an important person or group of people will approve and support a particular behavior. In other words, it is an individual's perceptions or views of other people's beliefs that will influence his/her intention to perform or not to perform certain behavior

In other words, an individual's intention to perform certain behavior is influenced by his or her perceptions of other people's beliefs (Hidayat et al., 2021).

Previous findings stated that subjective norms have a positive impact towards the consumers' purchase intention (Aryadhe et al., 2018).

Subjective norm such as social influence can evoke a consumer's purchasing intention of a product. The stronger the subjective norms of a consumer, the stronger the consumer's purchase intention towards a product. If an individual's essential people demand him/her to buy a certain product, there is a high tendency that the person will buy the product. (Hidayat et al., 2021)

For instance, a study amongst millennial in Indonesia showed that subjective norm, suchlike support from family and friends positively influence them to act on energy efficiency in eco-friendly homes or buy a green residential building (Wijayaningtyas et al., 2021). In a study by Safuan et al. (2021) on organic food business in a 'new normal' life, organic food purchase intention is associated with perceived social pressure, personal attitude, and perceived autonomy (Safuan et al., 2021).

3.2.1 Perceived Social Pressure

Perceived social pressure is defined as social influence that controls an individual's intentions, in which social responsibilities would cause specific performance behaviors in mind. In a previous study regarding purchase intention of organic food, it was proven that family, friends, workfellows and other environmental constituents such as social media can lead to purchase intention (D. T. Nguyen & Truong, 2021; Safuan et al., 2021).

In a collectivist country like Malaysia, an individual's social perception is high due to social conformity (Safuan et al., 2021). Thus, an individual's decision-making in purchase intention may be affected by external social pressure. For instance, due to the COVID-19 transmissions, there was a growing concern in the social forces when discussing organic food purchase intention. (Safuan et al., 2021)

Hypothesis 1 stipulates that social pressures from family, friends or surrounding people induce the intention to purchase healthcare product.

H1: Perceived Social Pressure positively affect Purchase Intention.

3.2.2 Personal Attitude

Attitude is a person's relatively consistent evaluations, feelings and tendencies towards an idea or object (Kotler et al., 2005). In other definitions, attitude is a reflection of a person's actions based on the belief in persons, issues, or objects that affect his/her actions and feelings (Safuan et al., 2021). A previous study conducted in developing countries regarding organic food showed that attitude is a significant factor towards purchase intention (Safuan et al., 2021). Another study stated that consumer's positive belief has the potential to change attitude and was proven significant towards intention

(Periyayya et al., 2016; Safuan et al., 2021). Previous research stated that information received by a consumer will influence his/her preferences (Adawiyah et al., 2021; Safuan et al., 2021).

Hence, attitude is an aspect that needs to be studied to analyze the transition from individual perception into positive or negative action, in Malaysian 'new normal' setting.

Hypothesis 2 mentions that personal attitude or individuals' disposition after learning about the pandemic situation leads to having purchase intention of anti-disease healthcare product.

H2: Personal Attitude positively affect Purchase Intention.

4.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will explain the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as the grand theory and the variables in a framework used in this research.

4.1 Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) coined by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) is widely used to study social psychology and marketing (Hidayat et al., 2021). TRA explains the relationship between attitudes and behaviors within human action. The theory defines the links between a person's behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, intentions, and norms. TRA serves the purpose to show that intention determines a person's behavior. A person's attitudes and his/her subjective norms determine his/her intention. TRA was designed to explain the cause of a behavior, including both internal and external factor, and to identify target strategies in favor of changing behavior. Typical elements of the model are comprised of attitude, subjective norm, and behavioral intention.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1957) expressed that the intention to carry out a behavior determines whether the behavior will be carried out or not. One's behavior is the result of specific behavioral intent (Zhang et al., 2020). In other words, attitudes and subjective norms which is also acknowledged as social influences are what shapes a person's intention (Hidayat et al., 2021).

4.2 Conceptual Framework

The study is investigating the effects of subjective norms by perceived social pressure and personal attitude dimensions towards purchase intention of healthcare product hand sanitizer.



Figure 1: Conceptual framework

5.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Method

This study relies on a set of articles and reports available online that analyze the coronavirus effects on pattern and intention to purchase by consumers being in the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper also drew information from online newspaper articles and official statements from official governmental website. In order to test the validity of hypotheses, consequent to this research may proceed with preparation, testing, distribution, and result collection of online survey questionnaires for at least with 300 target respondents from Malaysia. The data collected shall then be processed by quantitative method design with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 28 using statistical techniques such as ANOVA.

6.0 STUDY CONCLUSION

The study performed on consumers' purchase intention with regards to pandemic situation will render benefits to researchers, marketers, manufacturers, practitioner, and service provider in the medical and hospitality industries. Due to time constraints, this research is limited to a small range of subject respondents with observation at a single point of time. Future research shall consider for repetitive observations on changes in the same group of participating respondents over an extended period of time.

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