

The Influence of Personal and Product Factors on Gift Purchase Intention

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***Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to examine the effects of personal and product factors on gift purchase intention. As this paper seeks to understand the Malaysian consumers' gift purchasing behaviour, a non-probability quota sampling is being adopted. The quota sampling is based on gender (50 Male- 50 Female) and ethnicity (50 Malay-30 Chinese-20 Indian). This research adopted mall intercepts method in collecting the data, since most of the gifts are often bought in shopping malls. Self-administered questionnaire was utilised and a total 447 questionnaires were used for further analysis. To analyse the data collected for this research Structural equation modelling (SEM) was adopted. The results of the study indicate that consumer knowledge, consumer involvement, perceived risk, brand name and perceived quality have a significant influence on gift purchase intention. Furthermore, the result of the study found that consumer involvement has the strongest influence on purchase intention, while perceived quality has the weakest influence on purchase intention. This paper is one of the first studies that examine the extent personal and product factors have an influence on gift purchase intention. This paper also offers new empirical findings on how eastern culture consumers participate in gift giving.*

***Keywords:** Gift giving, Consumer Behavior, Purchase Intention, Gift Purchase*

1. Introduction

Research on gift giving are commonly found in disciplines such as sociology (Gouldner, 1960), economic (Belshaw, 1965) and anthropology (Mauss, 1954). However, there are very limited researches being conducted in the marketing discipline. This is rather surprising looking into the amount of the gift giving occasions being celebrated each year (Green & Alden, 1988). In the marketing discipline, researches conducted on gift giving can be divided into two major spectrums. One is using gift giving as the primary variable of the study while the other is using gift giving as a situational variable of the study against non-gift buying (DeVere et al., 1983). In this research gift giving is treated as the primary variable of research.

Meanwhile, this unique gift giving ritual is found to impact significantly on the country's economy. In a country like USA alone, more than US\$100 billion is spent on gifts each year celebrating various gift giving occasions (Ruth et al., 1999). Similarly, the gift market in China is accountable for more than a quarter billion Yuan (Jiang, Lu and Lu, 2007). A lot of money is spent on gifts due to high participation in the gift giving ritual and the amount of gift giving occasions people celebrates throughout the year. In addition to that, gift giving occasion like Christmas and Valentine's Day, are also believed to have a unique social significance to certain people like showing love or care. As a result, today's gift giving occasions are becoming more commercialised, and most marketers are taking advantage of this ritual of giving by promoting their products to the consumers. In addition to that, it is also becoming a major driver for domestic consumption in the country's economy.

According to Austin and Huang (2011), a gift has the ability to indicate the perception of themselves, the perception of a giver towards the receiver, the perception of giver's current and future relationship with the recipient and also the giver's intention. In another research, Segev and Shoham (2016) found

that the givers' public self-consciousness and self-monitoring were positively related to the motivation to engage in joint gift-giving to facilitate the development of desired private identities. These researches clearly show that gift giving is indeed a rather complex ritual to participate. There is a need for more literature to have a better understanding on consumer gift giving behaviour. Gift giving is not an easy task in comparison to buying for one's own self as there are many things to be considered such as the gift and how the recipient may perceive the giver upon receiving the gift.

Majority of the literatures on the gift purchase had been focusing on the personal factors in gift selection and purchase. It is found that the two most researched personal factors been examined in gift purchase are socioeconomic and demographic variables of the consumer (Wagner and Garner, 1993; Laroche et al., 2000). Similarly there had been very limited researches are evident that examine how the gift itself has an influence in giver purchase behaviour. Prior research mostly examined the influence of the gift packaging (Howard, 1992; Larsen and Watson, 2001) and the types of gift being used as a gift (Kemp et al., 2011; Tuten and Kiecker, 2009). Therefore, it is important to further examine the personal factors other than the socioeconomic and demographic variables and the attributes of the gift in influencing giver's selection and purchase of gift.

This paper attempt to fill these current gaps discussed above by further extends the research of gift purchase behaviour. It is been done by incorporates the personal factors and gift factors into an integral framework to understand how these factors has an influence on gift purchase. Specifically this paper will examine personal factors such as consumer knowledge, consumer involvement and perceived risk influencing givers' purchase intention. Next, this paper will examine the influence of gift factors such as brand name and perceived quality on givers' purchase intention. Findings from this research will provide a great insight for marketers and consumer researchers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Knowledge

Consumer knowledge often plays a pivotal role in predicting consumer purchasing behaviour (Lee et al., 2014; Liefeld, 2004; McEachern and Warnaby, 2008). This is because consumer knowledge has an influence on all phases in the consumer decision process (Bettman and Park, 1980). Consistently past research found that consumer knowledge plays a major role in the acquisition and evaluation of various extrinsic cues in a product evaluation (Cordell, 1997; Schaefer, 1995; Lee and Lee, 2009). Devlin (2002) found that, high consumer knowledge will tend to use intrinsic cues in product evaluation while low consumer knowledge will tend to use extrinsic cues instead. The level of consumer knowledge leads to different cues used in product evaluation could be explained by the consumer information processing model. Meanwhile in another separate study Beattie (1982) in the study found that low knowledge consumers tend to use product attribute comparison in a product evaluation. However for high knowledge consumer, they have built an ideal prototype for a product class within an internal knowledge structure in memory.

Many studies had examined the influence of consumer product knowledge on consumer purchase intention. Lee and Lee (2009) in the study of laptop product found that consumer knowledge is significantly influenced on purchase intention. Lin and Chen (2006) in the study of insurance and catering services found that consumer knowledge strongly influence on purchase intention. Meanwhile, Marcketti and Shelley (2009) in the study of counterfeit apparel products also found that the increase of consumer knowledge leads to consumer having higher behavioural intention of paying more for non-counterfeit goods. The influence of consumer knowledge on purchase intention was also evident in online shopping context. Consistent with part studies, consumer knowledge is found to have an influence on consumer purchase intention (Chen and Chang, 2005). Thus it can be hypothesised that:

H1: Consumer Knowledge has an influence on gift purchase intention

2.2 Consumer Involvement

The concept of consumer involvement has received considerable amount of attention in the consumer behaviour research for the past decades. Past researches often examine the causal effect of consumer involvement influence on other various constructs. Cheung and To (2011) in the study examined the influence of customer involvement on perceived service performance of Chinese bank is found to be largely significant. Ko et al. (2010) in the study of international sport event had found that the level of involvement significantly influence the event quality perception as well as the level of satisfaction. Meanwhile, Varki and Wong (2003) found that customer involvement is significantly impacted on consumers' willingness to engage in relationships with service providers. It is also found that the level of involvement is significantly effecting the perception of the brand status as well as the brand attitude (O'Cass and Choy, 2008). It is clearly showed that consumer involvement is an important construct to understand consumer purchasing behaviour better.

Numerous studies had examined the relationship between consumer involvement and purchase intention. Kim et al. (2007) in the study of online apparel retailer found that consumer shopping involvement has an influence on the consumer patronage intention. In another study conducted by Huang (2012) in the study on virtual goods found that consumer involvement has a great influence on purchase intention. Meanwhile, Walsh et al. (2012) in the study of drivers on consumer intention to purchase manufacturer brands found out that consumer involvement on a brand has an influence on consumer intention to purchase manufacturer brand.). Thus it can be hypothesised that:

H2: Consumer Involvement has an influence on gift purchase intention

2.3 Perceived Risk

Bauer (1960) introduced the concept of risk into consumer behaviour stating "consumer behaviour involves risk in the sense that any action of the consumer will produce consequences which he cannot anticipate with anything approximate certainty, and some of which at least are likely to be unpleasant" (p. 390). Unlike in other disciplines risk is being evaluated in both positive and negative aspect of it, in consumer research risk is only come from the negative aspect (Dholakia, 2001). It is found that risk exist in all purchase decision and often consumers find ways to minimise the level of risk perceived by employing various risk reduction strategies in a purchase (Greatorex and Mitchell, 1994).

When a purchase is perceived being risky or exceed the tolerable level of risk, consumer will generate ways to reduce the level of perceived risk (Yeung et al., 2010). It is found that consumer perceived risk in the purchase could be reduced either by reducing the consequences of the purchase or by reducing the level of perceived uncertainty of the purchase (Mitchell and McGoldrick, 1996). When consumer able to find ways to reduce the level of perceived risk to a tolerable level, the intention towards the purchase will be higher. Thus it can be hypothesised that:

H3: Perceived Risk has an influence on gift purchase intention

2.4 Perceived Quality

Quality is being conceptualised differently across different discipline of study. In marketing context, quality is conceptualised as the "consumer's judgement about the superiority or excellence in the product" or better known as perceived quality (Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived quality is subjective in nature where the level of quality is highly reliant on consumer judgement and not on the actual product quality itself. Since perceived quality results from consumer perception process, the level of perceived quality will differs depending on the type of product category, the usage purpose as well as the consumer itself (Oude Ophuis and Van Trijp, 1995). Many studies had been conducted to understand how consumers' use various cues to impute the perceived quality of the product (Zain and Yasin, 1997; Vranesevic and Stancec, 2003). This is because the level of perceived quality has an effect on the product and company performance (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993, Aaker and Jacobson, 1994).

Past studies have found that perceived quality has a direct influence on consumer purchase intention. Woodside and Taylor (1978) found that the higher the perceived quality of the product brands the higher the purchase intention of the consumer. Similarly Kwak and Kang (2009) in the study of sport merchandise purchase also found that perceived quality has a significant direct influence on purchase intention. The direct effect of perceived quality on purchase intention was also found to be significant in a study conducted in the B2B context (Kumar and Grisaffe, 2004). Thus it can be hypothesised that:

H4: Perceived Quality has an influence on gift purchase intention

2.5 Brand Name

It is one of the most important marketing decisions in a company is to develop brand names that work for a product (Keller, 1993). At the same time, the task is not getting any easier by the day with the ever increasing amount of new brand names being introduced. While it may be an uphill task to most companies but it does not deter these companies from continuing to build a strong and effective brand name. This is because the success or failure of the product much depends on the brand name rather than the product itself (Laforet, 2011; Olavarrieta et al., 2009). Brand name has such strong influence on the success or failure of a product primarily because of the multi-function a brand could perform for a product and company. It is found that brand name could enhance the awareness as well as create a positive image for a product (Aaker, 1991). It could also elicit consumer to have more favourable attitude towards the product (Simon, 1970). More importantly brand names could attain differential advantages over competitor products (Rio et al., 2001).

Brand name is often used by consumers in purchase decision as such past researches examined the influence of brand name on consumer purchase intention. Laforet (2011) in the study of chocolate and cereal bars found that consumer has a higher intention to choose a well-known brand over price when purchasing those products. Similar finding is also found in the acceptance of genetically engineered corn chips, whereby the more well known the brand the higher level of consumer accepting the product (Lusk et al., 2002). In addition, this finding is also found in mobile phone products whereby brand name has a significant effect on purchase intention (Shabbir et al., 2009). Thus it can be hypothesised that:

H4: Brand Name has an influence on gift purchase intention

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling Design

The objectives of this research are focusing more on theoretical generalizability rather than population generalizability. As Malaysia is a multi-racial country and it is difficult to estimate the exact number of people involved in gift giving as such non-probability quota is being adopted in this research. The quota sampling is based on gender and ethnicity. For gender it is being set at 50-50 (Male- Female) is to ensure no biasness since past researches often found that a gender differences in the gift giving behaviour (Palan et al., 2001; Jonason et al., 2012) and ethnicity is set at 50-30-20 (Malay-Chinese-Indian) to reflect the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia.

Most consumer researches often used student as their subject of study. The main concern using student is the ability to draw a generalisation to a larger population (Hagger et al. 2007). This research will instead use general adult as subject of study in comparison to student. By using general adult the data collected will provide a more accurate and realistic opinions as they have rich life experience and maturity level in comparison to student. This research proposed a target sample of 500 respondents.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

The survey instrument for the current study is using questionnaire to collect all the relevant information in order to examine all the relationship in the proposed model. Basically, the questionnaire are divided

into three main sections and a total of 53 items to measure each of the exogenous as well as the endogenous construct in the proposed model. The questionnaire for this study was translated from English into Malay using back to back translation method. Translation of the questionnaire is found to be necessary because Malay is the official language in Malaysia and English is rather only the second official language spoken and written in Malaysia. A dual language questionnaire will increase the participation of respondents and understanding of the questions asked in the questionnaire. In order to avoid confusion on the different types of gift giving occasions celebrated in Malaysia and the different recipients of gift, respondents are told in the questionnaire that they are purchasing a gift for someone they love or important to them during their Birthday.

All the measurements for the study are being adapted from previous researches. Firstly the three personal factors Consumer Involvement construct was measured using five items adapted from Laroche et al. (2010). Consumer Knowledge construct was measured using seven items adopted from Laroche et al. (2003). Perceived Risk construct was measured using five items adapted from Laroche et al. (2000). As for the next two product factors, Brand Name construct was measured using five items adapted from Bristow et al. (2002). As for Perceived Quality construct it was measured using five items adopted from (Dodds et al., 1991). Lastly Purchase Intention construct was measured using five items adopted from (Chu and Lu 2007 & Prendergast, Tsang and Chan 2010). All items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 Strongly Disagree- 7 Strongly Agree).

3.3 Data Collection

This research adopted mall intercepts method approach in collecting the data, as most of the gifts are bought in the shopping malls. Shopping mall is also a place that enable giver to choose, compare and evaluate the right type of gift to purchase as there various types of store resides in a shopping mall. This research employed self-administered questionnaire approach for their data collection technique. For smooth running of the data collection process, current study had employed four research assistants to be stationed in each of the shopping malls selected. Prior to collecting the data, these research assistant had undergone training and brief all the guidelines the data collection process. The data collection will only be conducted on the weekend as most people will patronize shopping malls on the weekend. Furthermore, collecting the data over the weekend will help to increase the likelihood the respondents come from various demographic backgrounds.

4. Findings

Structural equation modelling (SEM) is being adopted to analyse the data collected for this research. One of the most important reasons this technique of analysis being adopted because this multivariate technique of analysis incorporates unobserved and observed variables in the model (Byrne, 2001). The measurement validation procedures adopted for this study are using the two steps approached which brought forward by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Firstly, all latent constructs including reflective indicators are being depicted into the proposed measurement model. This study will then examine the convergent validity, discriminant validity and construct reliability of the measurement in order to make sure that it is valid and reliable. Lastly each hypothesis for this research is being tested.

4.1 Measurement Model

In this study, a total of six latent constructs being incorporated that indicating the items for each scale (consumer knowledge, consumer involvement, perceived risk, brand name, perceived quality and purchase intention) for the initial proposed measurement model. All the latent constructs will go through an assessment of fit and unidimensionality, to ensure that the proposed model has a good model fit and meeting all the various fit indices. The result from the test found that overall the indices for the measurement model are good fit. The results found that chi-square has a value of 569 with a degrees of freedom of 512 ($P=0.000$). Ideally the value of chi-square should have a very low value but chi-square value is very sensitive to the sample size. To counter this weakness, the value of chi-square is being

normalised by the degree of freedom (Bentler 1990). According to Hair et al. (2006) the value for χ^2/df should have a value below 3.0. The analysis of the current study has a value of 1.112, therefore, it fulfilled the requirement and thus it showed a good fit. In addition CFI and RMSEA are being analysed and found that these indices above the recommended value thus showed a good fit.

Next this research will examine the convergent validity of the data. Each of the factor loadings is being examined to discover any potential problem exists within the CFA model. The result from the analysis found that each factor loadings are significant at 0.001 above the recommended level of 0.50, whereby the lowest value is 0.742 and the highest value is 1.274. Next, the composite reliability is being analysed and it is found that the value is in the range between 0.841 (consumer knowledge) to 0.957 (consumer involvement) is above the recommended value larger than 0.70. Variance extract is also being examined and the analysis found that the value is in the range between 0.520 (perceived risk) to 0.817 (consumer involvement). The values from the analysis exceed the acceptable 0.50 threshold.

Other than convergent validity, this research also examines the discriminant validity of the data. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested that discriminant validity is determined by the variance extracted value. To achieve discriminant validity, the value exceeds the squared inter construct correlations associated with that particular construct. As shown in Table 1.0 found that the variance extracted value for each construct is above its squared correlation with other constructs.

4.2 Structural Model

The fit measures indicated that the structural model was acceptable ($\chi^2 = 1455$, $\chi^2/df = 2.922$, CFI = 0.912, RMSEA = 0.068). As such this research will examine the effect of the five exogenous constructs (consumer knowledge, consumer involvement, perceived risk, brand name and perceived quality) on the endogenous variable (purchase intention). Firstly the analysis found that consumer knowledge has an influence on purchase intention, thus H1 is supported. The analysis also found that the other two personal factors, consumer involvement and perceived risk has an influence on purchase intention, thus H2 and H3 are supported. Also as hypothesised both product factors brand name and perceived quality has an influence on purchase intention, thus H4 and H5 are supported.

Table 1: Discriminant Validity Results

| Construct | AVE | BN | PQ | CK | CI | PR | PI |
|-----------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----|
| BN | 0.561 | 1 | | | | | |
| PQ | 0.643 | .317 (0.10) | 1 | | | | |
| CK | 0.577 | .391 (0.15) | .202 (0.04) | 1 | | | |
| CI | 0.817 | .291 (0.08) | .476 (0.23) | .242 (0.06) | 1 | | |
| PR | 0.520 | -.333 (0.11) | -.475 (0.23) | -.202 (0.04) | .561 (0.31) | 1 | |
| PI | 0.650 | 0.432 (0.19) | .496 (0.25) | .185 (0.03) | .761 (0.58) | .584 (0.34) | 1 |

Note: VE= Variance Extracted; BN= Brand Name; PQ= Perceived Quality; CK= Consumer Knowledge; CI- Consumer Involvement; PR= Perceived Risk; PI= Purchase Intention

All correlation is significant at $p < .01$

5. Discussion and Conclusion

From the Structural equation modelling analysis it is found that consumer knowledge has a weak influence on purchase intention (β 0.127, $p < 0.05$). This finding is found to be consistent with past researches that consumer knowledge has an influence on purchase intention (Lee and Lee 2009; Marcketti and Shelley 2009). The finding shows that giver will purchase a gift when they sufficient knowledge about the gift. Unlike purchasing a product for own self, a gift will also symbolise the amount of effort in maintaining and strengthening the relationship between the giver and the recipient. As such giver will adopt a strategy to avoid purchasing a wrong gift by selecting a gift that the giver is familiar with.

Next the result from the analysis showed that consumer involvement has a significant strong influence on consumer gift purchase intention (β 0.597, $p < 0.001$). This result is also found to be consistent with previous studies that examined the influence on consumer involvement on purchase intention (Hynes and Lo 2006; Kim et al. 2007). This result found that level of involvement of a person has on a particular gift giving occasion will determine the intention to purchase a gift. There are two situations whereby the level of involvement will be heightened up. First the type of recipient a giver is giving the gift to, if a giver is purchasing a gift for someone they love or close the level of involvement will be even higher in comparison to someone that is not close to the giver. Secondly the importance of the gift giving occasion to the giver will also heighten the level of involvement. For instance giver's Wedding Anniversary; this occasion will have a higher gift purchase involvement over colleagues Birthday.

The analysis also found that consumer involvement is the most important factors influencing purchase intention in comparison to other personal and gift factors examined in the. One of the possible explanation for the finding is, a giver that is not interested in participating in a gift giving ritual, the idea of purchasing a gift will not exist. Therefore the extent how knowledgeable the giver, how good quality

is the gift and how well known is the brand of the gift will be insignificant. As such as previously discussed the level of involvement of a giver in a gift giving ritual is highly influenced by the recipient and the types of gift giving occasion.

The analysis on the influence of perceived risk is found to significantly weak influence on consumer gift purchase intention (β 0.173, $p < 0.05$). However, current study is found to be consistent with past researches that investigated the influence between perceived risk and purchase intention (Miyazaki and Fernandez, 2001; Klerck and Sweeney, 2007). Every person perceived some level of risk in the purchase and this risk often associated with the uncertainty and consequences of purchasing a wrong gift. More than often people will find ways to minimise the level of risk perceived in a purchase. However, if the level of risk is found to be too high for a person to comprehend, that person might postpone or even not has no intention to purchase the product. This is strongly related to the current research finding which found that perceived risk has an influence on gift purchase intention.

Other than personal factors, product factors are found to also being investigated its influence on purchase intention. Firstly brand name is being investigated its influences on purchase intention to purchase a gift. Based on the analysis conducted it is found that brand name is moderately influence purchase intention (β 0.231, $p < 0.001$). It is also found that current research findings are consistent with past researches that examine the influence of brand name on purchase intention (Lusk et al. 2002; Shabbir et al. 2009; Laforet 2011). The analysis shows that the more favourable the brand name of the gift the higher purchase intention towards the gift. This means that giver use brand name as a strategy to aid them in purchasing a gift. The finding can also be interpreted that giver tend to purchase a more favourable name because even the product may not be suitable, but the brand name will able to neutralise giver's embarrassment or lack of effort in purchasing a gift. This is because the brand value as well as the brand equity of a brand able to signify how much the giver appreciate the recipient.

Lastly perceived quality being investigated its influence on purchase intention. From the analysis it is found that perceived quality does have weak influence on purchase intention for current context of study (β 0.092, $p > 0.048$)., it is found that result from this research is consistent with past researches that similarly investigated that perceived quality has an influence on purchase intention (Woodside and Taylor 1978; Kwak and Kang 2009). Relating current research to gift purchase, the higher the quality of the gift the higher intention of a giver will purchase the gift for the recipient. There are several reasons that giver tend to purchase a gift that has higher quality of gift. The most obvious reason is purchasing a gift that is low in quality will provide a negative impression of the recipient towards the giver such as lack of effort or inability to understand the needs of the recipient. This will jeopardise the relationship between the giver and the recipient. Also providing high quality gift can be as a strategy for giver to avoid gift that being purchased does not meet the needs of the recipient. When a recipient received a gift that is finest in quality, they will appreciate it more even though it may not be to the recipient liking. A gift that is reliable and high in quality will translate that the giver's effort is high, and the thoughts are there. Therefore, the recipient will gracefully accepting the gift even though may not be to their liking.

The analysis from this research also found perceived quality has the weakest influence on giver in purchasing a gift. One will assume that the gift itself will play a major role when it comes to gift purchase, but this research found otherwise. One good explanation could be a gift is just symbolise the evidence of a person remember the occasion and appreciate the relationship between the giver and the recipient. Therefore this research shows that the attributes of the gift itself is secondary when it comes to gift giving.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This research only included three personal factors and two and has found that consumer involvement and brand name other the factors are found to have a weak influence on gift purchase intention. It will be interesting to include other factors in order to further understand the influence of personal factors and gift factors on gift purchase intention. The inclusion of more factors will further understand is it the thought that counts or gift plays a major role in gift giving. Furthermore it will provide a better insight for retailers in understanding how to market and position their products to givers. The gift giving occasion being studied in this research is Birthday. In a year there are many gift giving occasions a person participated in, some are very significant to the giver while some are least significant. In order to draw the generalisation of these research findings, future research should replicate this research in other gift giving occasions such as Valentine's Day or Mother's day and examine either the research findings are consistent with this research. Lastly this research is only focusing on purchasing a gift for someone they love or important to them on their Birthday. There should be call for more research to be conducted to examine the extent the types of relationship between giver and recipients have an influence on gift purchase intention.

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