

## PILOT STUDY ON CONSUMERS' PERCEIVED VALUES AND PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS SPORTSWEAR AMONG YOUTH IN PERLIS, MALAYSIA

Nurfareena Zahari<sup>1\*</sup>, Mohd Izzuddin Zulkifli<sup>2</sup>, Mohd Sofian Mohammad Rosbi<sup>3</sup>,  
Suraiya Ibrahim<sup>4</sup>, Nur Syuhadah Kamaruddin<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Applied and Human Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia  
Email: nurfareena@unimap.edu.my

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Applied and Human Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia  
Email: s181243139@unimap.edu.my

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Applied and Human Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia  
Email: sofian@unimap.edu.my

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Applied and Human Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia  
Email: suraiya@unimap.edu.my

<sup>5</sup>Faculty of Applied and Human Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia  
Email: syuhadah@unimap.edu.my

\*Corresponding Author

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**Abstract:** *Despite the recent economic downturn due to pandemic covid-19, sportswear fashion market remains as one of the most profitable industries worldwide. The growth of sales of sportswear in emerging economies is promising, which make them as the most attractive market for sportswear industry. This scenario also includes Malaysia which is one of the most attractive markets in Asian regions. This is because majority of consumers, especially youth are becoming more active in sports, along with initiatives by Ministry of Youth and Sports of Malaysia to uplift the youth to embrace sports as a lifestyle. Although sportswear fashion market is massive, little research has been conducted in regards to consumers' perceived values and purchase intention towards sportswear. This is ironic given a large number of sportswear fashion marketers that target youth as their major consumers. This study will take an initiative to examine the influence of consumers' perceived values on the purchase intention towards sportswear among youth in Perlis, Malaysia by adopting perceived values (PERVAL) measures. The data from a pilot survey of 35 local students in secondary schools in Perlis were gathered and analysed by using Descriptive Analysis, Reliability Analysis and Factor Analysis.*

**Keywords:** *Sportswear Fashion, Perceived Values (PERVAL), Purchase Intention, Youth Consumers*

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## Introduction

Sport is popular in Malaysia and there is special column for sport stories since three decades ago in all major daily newspapers (Ilias et al., 2020). Despite the popularity of sports, in the past years, people were not aware of healthy lifestyle in Malaysia due to unhealthy habits likes smoking and lack of exercising (Ilias et al., 2020). The demand towards the sportswear apparel was low at this time and the interest towards sportswear is still lacking. However, the phenomenon has started to change nowadays where people are starting to become more aware of their health and more interested in following several fitness trends such as getting a home exercise equipment, trying different forms of exercise and also, attending fitness club (Ilias et al., 2020).

Most of the people who are involved with sports are around the age of 14 to 40 years old (Lim & Aprianingsih, 2016). This age group, which includes youth is active and indulge in various sports activities. According to Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668), youth is defined as those aged between 15 to 30 years old (Yunus & Laundau, 2019). Youth is among the most attractive market for sportswear because they are more familiar and knowledgeable about fashion than older generation. As stated by Zhang (2015), youth are clearly consumers with high fashion consciousness and have more interest toward sportswear fashion. This group will search for information, go shopping, develop intention and finally, make purchase for the product that they desire. Sportswear apparel is important to them as they can perform activities and also, bring out the image of sportman (Hwang & Choi, 2013).

There is no doubt that consumers nowadays are looking for brands and goods that are able to fulfil their own functional and emotional values or, specifically, perceived values. There is a wealth of models for perceived values and one of the most comprehensive models was summarised by Sweeney and Soutar (2002). Based on the model, there are four major consumers' perceived values that would be utilised in this study, namely; price, quality, social and emotional.

In Malaysia, where individuals' purchase intention and sportswear fashion consumption have not been adequately researched, studies addressing the significant relationship between perceived values and purchase intention are much needed (Zhang, 2015; Hwang & Choi, 2013). Youth in secondary schools provide an interesting segment for this study as most of them are active in sports and and they are either current or potential consumers of sportswear brands and goods. Eventhought they have not earned an income, they have a strong influence on the purchase decisions and spending patterns of their parents, family, and peers with the advancement of technology and exposure to current trends (Ilias et al., 2020).

Several studies have suggested that perceived values are fundamental in influencing consumer intention towards a product or a service, but there is lack of research that has been done to measure the influence of them on purchase intention. Some studies were also looking on consumer responses towards sportswear in general, without specifically looking at youth market (Ilias et al., 2020, Chi & Kilduff, 2011).

This study aims to examine the relationship between consumers' perceived values and purchase intention towards sportswear among youth in Perlis. As the sportswear market is continuing to grow despite the economic downturns due to pandemic Covid-19, it is expected that the findings of this study will offer huge and important theoretical and practical contributions.

## Literature Review

### Theory of Consumption Values

The theoretical foundation of consumers' perceived values is still under development and the theory of consumption values has been extensively discussed in relation to perceived values. Theory of consumption values, which was first introduced by Sheth et al. (1991), extensively focused on how consumption values (i.e., functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional value) influence customer preference behaviour towards durable and nondurable goods, services, or brands across consumer and industrial market. This theory explains on why consumers prefer to purchase a specific product and opt for one product or brand over another. This theory suggests that perceived and real value for consumption can predict consumer attitudes and behavior toward purchase. The theory of consumption values provides a strong theoretical foundation from which to build PERVAL measures and scales (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001).

### Sportswear Fashion

Sportswear has grown from an athletes-only niche market to become part of mainstream fashion. Sportswear is purchased for different purposes and by several types of customers. For example, people may consider buying sportswear simply to play sports, enhance results, or associate with a team; for non-sports reasons, others may consider sportswear to express a sporty image outside the sports event (Wu & Chalip, 2015). The benefits that sportswear bring such as lightweight and stretchable tend to push sportswear's growth. According to Wray and Hodges (2008), sportswear is purchased in need to perform and focus on active sports. Besides that, consumers also purchase the sportswear apparel based on the sports figures that they admire, the team or club and the brand that inspire them (Hwang & Choi, 2013).

According to a research report released by Global Industry Analysts Inc (Allied Market Research (2020), the global sports and fitness apparel market is expected to hit US\$ 231.7 billion by 2024. The sportswear brands were not only representative of the global consumer, but also one of the most highly branded areas of the global fashion industry. Many sportswear companies were consistently rated as the most well-known global brands. For example, Nike ranked 25th and Adidas at ranked 60th (Interbrand, 2017). Sportswear apparel consists of goods such as shorts, sweatshirts, and t-shirts that can be used for sport activities like jogging, yoga, and basketball (Chi & Kilduff, 2011).

According to Reuters (2016), the competition in the sportswear market is really tough compared to any other global apparel market. This market is conquered by big multinational companies like Nike and Adidas that being categorized such as big player and followed by other corporations such as Puma and Under Armour. The Asia-Pacific Sportswear Market is estimated to experience \$62.6 billion in sales by 2020, growing at an 8.1 percent from 2015 to 2020 (Allied Market Research, 2020). The Asian region's developing economies, such as India and China provide attractive prospects for competitors in the sportswear fashion industry.

In the Malaysian market, as the awareness about the healthy lifestyle is growing, the sportswear fashion market is thriving. There are many options that are available for consumers to purchase sportswear apparel, where many products can be reach at the famous retailer within the country such as Al-Ikhsan and JD Sports and also, online (Ilias et al., 2020).

### **Price Value**

Price is an amount of money paid on a good or service or a number of prices exchanged by customers with the advantage of the exchange of a service product or use of a service product (Ashaduzzaman et al., 2011). Price also communicates the expected value placement of the product or brand by the company to the consumers (Wong & Yahyah, 2008). Many authors have shown that the price of a product can play a positive role in assessing the understanding of its worth (Wiedmann et al., 2009). According to Wiedmann et al. (2009), privilege customers often prefer to use price as a prestige predictor and premium pricing can make certain products or services more attractive as higher price signify higher status. Moreover, consumers who believe strongly in the price and value of their favourite brands can compare and evaluate prices with alternative brands (Wong & Yahyah, 2008).

### **Quality Value**

Perceived quality is characterised as the consumer's judgement on the overall excellence or superiority of a product or service (Snoj et al., 2004). It is the decision of the customer on the overall excellence and performance of a product and not the actual quality of a product (Wang & Tsai, 2014). There is neither an agreed nor the best definition of quality but the most common definition of quality relates to meeting or exceeding expectations (Snoj et al., 2004). According to Wang and Tsai (2014), perceived quality is usually based on key dimensions, such as reliability, performance and brand that consist of product specifications. It would be helpful to define and quantify its key dimension, but it should not be overlooked that perceived quality is a general perception (Wang & Tsai, 2014).

### **Social Value**

Social value is defined as the perceived utility gained from the association of an alternative with one or more particular social groups" (Sheth et al., 1991). Social value has been shown to affect the preference of certain product types and brands (Williams & Soutar, 2000). It has the ability to influence an individual's brand preference by adapting the viewpoints or behaviours of others with whom they associate (Hoonsopon & Puriwat, 2016). Individuals are fundamentally motivated to form and maintain social interactions with others, not just their families or relatives but even with representatives of society in general, such as actors, influencers, and also strangers (Hoonsopon & Puriwat, 2016). However, individuals who think about their own personality or opinions are less willing to shift their behaviour to adapt to another (Mourali & Yang, 2013).

### **Emotional Value**

Emotional value is characterised as the product or service's ability to stimulate feelings or affective states (Williams & Soutar, 2000). Emotional value is characterised as the benefit that a product produces from feelings or affective states, such as enjoyment or pleasure (Asshidin et al., 2016). Foreign products tend to evoke positive emotion when the brand is well known, highly popular and desirable, especially by consumers who admire Western lifestyles (Kashi, 2013). In developing countries, individuals tend to associate international products with symbolic meanings in developed countries such as wealth and status, which increases the emotional reward when using these brands, such as a feeling of pleasure and happiness (Kumar et al., 2009).

### **Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention also can be defined as ‘an individual conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand’ (Spears & Singh, 2004, p.56). According to Mirabi et al. (2015), purchase intention is a situation in which the buyer intends to buy goods and services. Purchase intention may change as a result of perceived benefit, efficiency or price and additionally, the buyer is influenced by both internal and external influences during the purchasing process (Gogoi, 2013). Positive feelings and perceived values about a product or service can affect the consumer's purchasing intention (Das, 2014). According to Das (2014), purchasing intentions are some point in the purchasing process, where the consumer must stop looking for and evaluating information about alternative products in the evoked set and make the purchase by generally focusing on matching a purchasing motive with the brand's attributes or characteristics under consideration.

### **Hypothesis Development**

#### **Price Value and Purchase Intention**

The most common challenge in dealing with the purchase intention of consumers is the price offered (Jin & Suh, 2005). It is shown that price is considered as an important factor by consumers and therefore, having a major effect on consumers’ purchase intention (Junquera et al., 2016). According to Valaei and Nikashemi (2017), price sensitivity significantly affects whether apparel is well received. This has become more prominent, especially for Gen Y, since the main proportion of what is generally referred to in this generation cohort consists of students, and they appear to be price sensitive due to the fact that students are possibly on a small income (Valaei & Nikashemi, 2017). However, in recent years, the sportswear market has joined the dynamic luxury or ultra-premium markets as some companies want customers to pay for their luxury product such as Nike's skate product ‘Baat LR Low Premium ID’ and Asics running shoes ‘Gel-Kinsei 4’ (Valaei & Nikashemi, 2017). Based on these discussions, the hypothesis that was proposed for this study is:

*H1: Price value significantly influences purchase intention towards sportswear among youth in Perlis.*

#### **Quality Value and Purchase Intention**

Quality value is a key factor in determining the intention of buying and when a product has a higher quality; consumers are more likely to buy it (Mehra, 2017). Their research also highlighted that product quality has a positive effect on the buying intent of consumers. According to Tsotsou (2006), the higher quality product assessed generates greater purchasing intention than lower quality goods. (Wang & Tsai, 2014) suggested that a higher perception of quality increases the perceived value of customers, which enhances the purpose of purchasing. With regard to sportswear, the material, design and workmanship, the look, touch and feel of the product would contribute to a perception of how good or poor the quality would be (Cham et al., 2013). Grounded by these arguments, the following hypothesis was proposed:

*H2: Quality value significantly influences purchase intention towards sportswear among youth in Perlis.*

### **Social Value and Purchase Intention**

According to Hu et al. (2015), social value is a significant indicator of consumer satisfaction and purchasing intention development. It is found that social value has a huge influence on people's intention to purchase (Hu et al., 2015). Individual who chose to act according to socially accepted conventions and norms can be affected by buying products that tend to fit into society (Labrecque et al., 2011). It is claimed that fashion style and choice can be influenced by the peer group a person belongs to and the stronger the connection between customers and their peer groups, the greater the group's effect will be on consumers' preference and purchase intention (Labrecque et al., 2011). Consumers who are actively involved in sports are likely to spend more time looking for the right sportswear because they are committed consumers (Chew & Leng, 2016; Chi & Kilduff, 2011). As a result, consumers who are involved in sports are more likely to be prone to social influence in making purchase consideration (Chew & Leng, 2016). Grounded on these reviews, the following hypothesis was proposed:

*H3: Social value significantly influences purchase intention towards sportswear among youth in Perlis.*

### **Emotional Value and Purchase Intention**

The term "emotional value" refers to a consumer's affective responses to a brand (Kashi, 2013). Importantly, emotional reaction to a brand is a good indicator of purchase intention, accounting for more than twice the variance of cognition (Kashi, 2013). An increasing number of customers are buying products to meet their emotional needs (Asshidin et al., 2016). When presented with many sportswear brands in the market, consumers tend to select a highly popular and reputable sportswear brands that can evoke positive emotions (Chi & Kilduff, 2011). Positive emotions such as satisfaction and pleasure that are derived by the brand can enhance consumer intention to purchase and repurchase the brand (Asshidin et al., 2016; Chi & Kilduff, 2011). Besides that, consumers who are emotionally pleased with their purchase of apparel from a particular brand can repurchase the similar brand even though other alternatives are available (Kashi, 2013). Therefore, the hypothesis established as follows:

*H4: Emotional value significantly influences purchase intention towards sportswear among youth in Perlis.*

### **Methodology**

The study utilised self-administered survey in determining the influence of consumers' perceived values on purchase intention towards sportswear among youth in Perlis. The study collected both primary and secondary data, and the quantitative data generated were analysed using descriptive statistics which will include mean and the frequency counts.

The pilot study was conducted on simple random sampling of 35 students at secondary schools in Perlis in order to obtain the feedback on the structure of the questionnaire. IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 26) was used in this study to examine the data for pilot study. Respondents were requested to rate the questionnaire on the perceived values and purchase intention at a scale between 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### Instruments

The instrument to be used for data collection was adapted from previous studies. The questionnaire items for the variables are as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Research Instrument**

Test Instruments	Instrument Author(s)	Dimensions	Number of Items
Perceived Values	Sweeney & Soutar (2002); Chi & Kilduff (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price</li> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Emotional</li> </ul>	4 6 4 5
Purchase Intention	Kim & Oh (2020); Nam et al. (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	6

### Assumption Testing

Multivariate analysis techniques are based on assumptions that have to be met in order for results to be valid. As the assumption of normality is relevant to both factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, the data were tested for normality during the initial stages of analysis.

The assumption of normality means that the data follows a normal distribution. To check for normality, the skewness and kurtosis scores were examined. In a normally distributed data set, these scores can range from -2 to 2 (Hair et al., 2013). The skewness test is an indicator of its asymmetry whereas kurtosis is an indicator of its peakiness. Since all measures for the skewness and kurtosis were in this range, the study concluded that the distribution of data is almost symmetrical. Hence, the data obtained meets the required assumption that the data comes from a normal distribution. Table 2 shows that the variables tested in this study were normal as the skewness and kurtosis value fell between -2 to 2. Thus, the data is considered normally distributed.

**Table 2: Descriptive Analysis (Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis)**

Construct	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness	Kurtosis
			Statistic	Statistic
Price Value	4.19	.57950	-.359	-.380
Quality Value	4.51	.45184	-.374	-1.148
Social Value	3.76	.90127	-.045	-1.064
Emotional Value	4.46	.51466	-.446	-1.008
Purchase Intention	4.17	.65554	.025	-1.437
Valid N (listwise)	35			

### Reliability

The assessment of the structural model in this study is assessed based on the standard assessment recommended by Hair et al. (2013). An acceptable general rule of 0.6-0.7 indicates an adequate level of reliability and 0.8 or greater indicates tremendous level of reliability (Hair et al., 2013). Table 3 shows the reliability results of the pilot survey. The reliability of each construct is Price Value (0.776), Quality Value (0.847), Social Value (0.887), Emotional Value

(0.855) and Purchase Intention (0.839). This shows that all reliability scores are well above 0.7, which indicate a high reliability for all constructs.

**Table 3: Instrument Reliability**

Category	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Price Value	4	0.776
Quality Value	6	0.847
Social Value	4	0.887
Emotional Value	5	0.855
Purchase Intention	6	0.839

### Sample Adequacy

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was conducted to measure the sampling adequacy. The existence of the null hypothesis was tested through the Bartlett test of Sphericity to ensure whether a vital interrelationship arose among the tested variables (Field, 2009). The sample adequacy formed when the KMO value exceeded 0.6 (Pallant, 2013).

**Table 4: Sampling Adequacy**

#### 1. Price Value

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.600
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	47.276
	df	6
	Sig.	.000

#### 2. Quality Value

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.740
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	119.198
	df	15
	Sig.	.000

#### 3. Social Value

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.715
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	100.851
	df	6
	Sig.	.000

#### 4. Emotional Value

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.758
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	111.660
	df	10
	Sig.	.000

## 5. Purchase Intention

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.730
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	96.654
	df	15
	Sig.	.000

As demonstrated by Table 4, the KMO value for all variables were  $>0.6$  and are adequate while Bartlett's test significance value was  $<0.05$ , therefore, the entire null hypothesis are rejected. It was concluded that the current sample size is adequate for subsequent analysis.

### Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is used to measure and analyze the data and identify the structure of factors (Halim & Che-Ha, 2009). The communality value represents the amount of variance in each construct that can be explained by the extracted factors and the factor loading represents the relative importance of each construct to a factor (Field 2009). As a guideline, the minimum factor loading value was set to 0.4 and variables with an extracted communality of 0.3 or below were excluded (Field, 2009). Accordingly, factor analysis was conducted in this study.

**Table 5: Factor Analysis – Perceived Values**

Var	Test Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Price	This brand is reasonably priced	0.766			
	This brand offers value for money	0.772			
	This brand is a good product for the price	0.840			
	This brand is worthy paying for	0.723			
Quality	This brand is well made		0.859		
	This brand has good workmanship		0.947		
	This brand has an acceptable standard of quality		0.896		
	This brand has consistent quality		0.865		
	This brand would last a long time		0.768		
	This brand would perform consistently		0.782		
Social	This brand would improve the way I am perceived			0.809	
	This brand would make a good impression on other people			0.902	
	This brand would help me to feel acceptable by others			0.943	
	This brand would give its owner social approval			0.829	
Emotional	This brand is one that I would enjoy				0.931
	This brand would make me want to wear it				0.901
	This brand is the brand that I would feel comfortable about using				0.858
	This brand would give me pleasure				0.729
	This brand is one that I would feel excited about using				0.937

**Table 6: Factor Analysis – Purchase Intention**

Var	Test Items	F1
Purchase Intention	I will continue purchasing this brand in the future	0.526
	I have the desire to purchase this brand	0.912
	I plan to purchase this brand	0.830
	If I want to purchase sportswear, I will prefer to purchase this brand	0.633
	I will recommend this brand to my friends and my family members	0.692
	I plan to increase my frequency in purchasing this brand	0.964

As shown in Tables 5-6, the factor analysis indicated that the loadings for all items considered in the study met the threshold levels.

In particular, the pilot survey was conducted to gain information on the respondent understanding of the questionnaire items, their ability to comprehend the instructions, terms used in the questions and finally, the length of the questionnaire and the time spent completing it. A pilot study showed that the respondents had no problem with the questionnaire. All items and sentences were clear to the respondents during the pilot study. Therefore, no changes were made to the measurement items after the pilot study.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be shown that perceived values (PERVAL) model is a valid measurement and can be used to measure purchase intention. Additionally, all the items of perceived values and purchase intention are found to be reliable. The research will give very beneficial information by examining the influence of perceived values on purchase intention towards sportswear among youth in the context of Malaysia. The findings of this research will offer additional strength to existing theoretical findings in the area of marketing, sports marketing and consumer behaviour. In terms of managerial implication, the results would be expected to provide some perspectives and recommendations to sportswear fashion marketers in drafting various aspects of different marketing campaigns according to the strength of each perceived value, which inadvertently can enhance the purchase intention of youth consumers towards sportswear in Malaysia.

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