

CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARD INSTANT NOODLES

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between the factors of convenience (CO), product attributes (PA), subjective norms (SN) and perceived risk (PR) toward consumer purchase intention toward instant noodles. The population in this study was consumers who have experience purchasing and consuming instant noodles in Malaysia. 465 respondents were gathered, and the collected data were analyzed using SPSS. The relationship between the factors of convenience (CO), product attributes (PA), subjective norms (SN) and perceived risk (PR) toward consumer purchase intention toward instant noodles has been analyzed by using Spearman's Rho correlation as the data was not normally distributed. The findings show that convenience, product attributes, and subjective norms have a significant relationship between consumers' purchase intention toward instant noodles. Nevertheless, consumer perceived risk towards instant noodles recorded an insignificant relationship with purchase intention.*

Keywords: *instant noodles, convenience, product attributes, subjective norms, perceived risk*

Introduction

Instant noodles are a form of pre-cooked noodle that is often offered in single packets, cups, or bowls. It comes with dried block noodles and seasoning oil or flavouring powder (Sikander et al., 2017). There are two types of instant noodles available: instant dried noodles and instant fried noodles. Flour, starch, water, salt, or kansui (alkaline salt mixture) are added to enhance the texture and taste of the noodle before being partly cooked during steaming and dehydrating

the noodles in oil heat (Gulia et al., 2014). These instant noodles just need a few minutes to prepare by soaking the noodle block in boiling water and adding the seasoning powder, and they are ready to be eaten. According to the World Instant Noodle Association (WINA), the First Instant Noodle was called Chicken ramen and was invented by Momofuku Ando in Japan in 1958. Since the characteristics of instant noodles are convenience, long shelf life, affordability, and palatability, it has influenced millions of consumers all over the world to consume instant noodles (Park et al., 2011).

The popularity and consumption of instant noodles have increased recently regardless of age and gender (Park et al., 2011). Many factors lead to the intention to consume instant noodles. Reference (Gulia et al., 2014) stated the taste, nutrition, convenience, long shelf-life, and affordability have made instant noodles popular. A study from (Inoni, 2017) stated that instant food could be known as fast and convenient food, which is easy and quick to prepare and convenient to eat.

The previous study has stated that the rise in living costs makes it challenging for most people to afford their basic needs. This issue may influence customers' intentions to consume cheap and affordable food. Our diet now includes a variety of low-cost instant foods to choose from. According to the study, customers believe instant noodles can help them save money and time (Tan et al., 2016). Global data stated that the covid-19 outbreak had driven the instant noodles sales in APAC 2020. Due to the movement control order (MCO), many people stay at home and actively store emergency supplies. Therefore, instant noodles have become necessary in every family food stock. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between the factors of convenience (CO), product attributes (PA), subjective norms (SN) and perceived risk (PR) toward consumer purchase intention toward instant noodles. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) will be used in this study on consumers' purchase intention toward instant noodles.

Literature review

Consumer Purchase Intention

According to (Augustinus, 2020), purchase intention describes a consumer's intention to engage in purchasing behaviour. On the other hand, purchase intention cannot be equated with the actual purchase because purchase intention might be disrupted by intrinsic and extrinsic attributes such as prices, product quality, and so on (Dian & Limantara, 2017). Another study by (Tan et al., 2016) revealed that psychological action is the factor that influences consumers' buying intentions, which means their behaviour is directed by a product. Moreover, purchase intention determines if a product meets customers' expectations and needs further exploration of their goods and services. Consumers will be more satisfied when products and services meet their expectations, and they will be more disappointed if the quality of the product produced falls short of their expectations. The previous study found that certain product qualities, such as convenience, advertising, subjective norms, and perceived risk, all have a role in influencing customer purchase intentions (Tan et al., 2016)(Iqbal et al., 2021). Nevertheless, these variables have not been extensively researched among consumers in Malaysia. Therefore, this study will investigate the factors that affect consumer purchase attention towards the consumption of instant noodles.

Attitudes

Reference (Ajzen, 1991) defines attitude as the degree to which an individual has a positively or negatively opinion or perception of the action that determines their attitude toward the purchase intention. According to (Paul et al., 2016) attitude is the most important predictor of behavioural intention. Attitude is a psychological emotion directed through consumers' opinions, and if positive, behaviour tends to be more positive. Reference (Paul et al., 2016) define attitudes as a tendency to behave consistently favourably or unfavourably toward a certain thing such as product characteristics, brand, service or advertisement, which is vital for understanding why and how attitudes matter affect consumer behaviour. Hence, in this study, convenience and product attributes are classified as attitudes that will be analysed with consumer purchase intention toward instant noodles (Pearson, 2010).

Convenience

Over the years, convenience food has become one of the fastest expanding industries globally due to the significant time reduction, cooking skills, and mental effort required to prepare meals (Testa et al., 2021). Convenient food comprises not only the process of planning, purchasing, and preparing food, but it is also associated with eating and cleaning up the meals (Brunner, 2016). Therefore, the convenience of food preparation and consumption is described as time, physical energy, and mental effort savings. Since the characteristics of convenience foods like instant noodles can save consumers time and effort, it has made it easier for someone who is not good at cooking (Tan et al., 2016). Reference (Park et al., 2011) also mentioned that instant noodles need a few minutes to prepare by soaking the noodle block in boiling water and adding the seasoning powder, and they are ready to be eaten. Hence, instant food is a commonly consumed convenience food because it requires fewer preparation skills. Therefore, it impacts convenience food consumption (Wales, 2017). Therefore, this study developed the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: The convenience factor has a significant effect on the intention of the consumers to consume instant noodles.

Product Attributes

Product attributes play a significant role in marketing as it reflects the products' characteristics that appeal to consumers need. It can be explained as everything consumers believe about a product that can influence their purchase decision (Tan et al., 2016). Attributes can be described as visual and symbolic value, functional qualities, and ease of use by consumers. Hence, marketers can build effective product characteristics that consumers look for by understanding consumer preferences and how they make purchasing decisions (Faheem et al., 2020). At the same time, the flavour is an important attribute in influencing consumers to purchase food. According to the World Instant Noodles Association, (2021), each country has its unique flavours according to the local taste and culture. For instance, Korean instant noodles are popular among spicy enthusiasts who enjoy the spiciness of the noodles, Thai instant noodles are famous for their tom yum flavour, while Indonesia and Malaysia come in a variety of flavours such as chicken, beef, Asam laksa, curry, and vegetable flavours. Therefore, the study by (Faheem et al., 2020) stated that flavour and taste play a significant role in consumer purchase intention. Other than that, consumers' decisions about which product to purchase may also be influenced by the product's packaging. Instant noodles are available in a range of packaging options, including plastic cups and bowls, which are in high demand. The quality and quantity of some of the products are the same, but their packaging designs set them apart from their competitors' product packaging designs. Reference (Harwani, 2020) stated in their

study that the packaging design has a significant impact on purchase intention because a good design can attract attention, increase product performance, and create a strong competitive advantage in the target market or higher consumer interest in the product. Therefore, this study developed the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: The factor of product attributes has a significant effect on the intention of the consumers to consume instant noodles.

Subjective Norm

Subjective norms can be defined as pressure caused by the influence of others, including family, friends, or neighbours, which directly or indirectly affect the behaviour of someone (Ajzen, 1991) as cited in (Hasbullah et al., 2016). Reference (Eduardsah & Wartaka, 2018) stated it is also an individual's desire to adapt to a particular normative belief. The study on family buying behaviour discovered that parents at home had influenced their children's behaviour directly and indirectly (Ali & Kerpčarová 2019). When parents show their attitude to some behaviour, such as serving instant noodles as comfort food in their dishes, indirectly it will influence the intention of their children to consume the instant noodles. Reference (Omazic, 2016) also mentioned that family culture also becomes a factor to influence buying behaviour because it adapts to daily life. Apart from that, close friends also found has a significant effect on the intention of university students to consume instant noodles (Tan et al., 2016). Thus, this study will measure the subjective norms factor effect on consumer intention towards the consumption of instant noodles, and this study developed the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: The subjective norms factor has a significant effect on the intention of the consumer to purchase instant noodles.

Perceived Risk

Perceived risk can be defined as a negative impression and consumers' doubt about a product in their minds (Bhatti et al., 2018). Study by (Mitchell, 1999) also mentioned that perceived risk is rarely well portrayed by the product with the probability and consequences. The study by (Bhatti et al., 2018) stated that one of the most vital components in purchasing decisions is consumers' risk perception. Hence, when the consumer feels the risk perception indirectly, it will motivate consumer behaviour (Mitchell, 1999). Many types of perceived risk can be measured, such as financial risk, physical risk, functional risk, and psychological risk. But in this study, it can be related to physical risk, which can be defined as a consumer's concern that products can affect their health or physically injure them. This risk category includes all health-related and physical problems associated with the use of a product (Bhatti et al., 2018). Many studies have associated instant noodles with health problems. Nowadays, people are more worried about their food's health and components, but the demand for instant noodles has grown in recent years due to their attributes (Iqbal et al., 2021). The study of students' perception of risk factors related to fast food consumption found that students agree that fast food is cheaper than homemade food, but at the same time, they are worried about the calories that they consume the fast food. The study also mentioned that students were conscious of the risks of their unhealthy eating habits, but their behaviour was not linked to their knowledge base. It is because they were attracted to the attributes of fast food (Abraham et al., 2018). Therefore, to measure the relationship between perceived risk and the intention of the consumer to consume instant noodles, this study developed the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: The perceived risk factor has a significant effect on the intention of the consumers to consume instant noodles.

Methodology

Research Design

This research is carried out using a quantitative research design involving a large-scale survey and employed statistical analysis to analyse the obtained data as it allows for generalization of the findings (Barratt et al., 2015). This study used Purposive sampling because it will target specific types of people who can provide the needed information (Sekaran, 2003). Despite purposive sampling is under the non-probability sampling category and lack in term of the ability to generalize, however purposive sampling is still a preferable sampling method due to higher external validity (Andrade, 2021). G Power will be used to set the sample size. According to the calculation in G Power, a total of 138 sample sizes will be the sample for this research (Cohen, 1992).

An electronic questionnaire using google form is used in this research as this platform offer convenience in term of the higher level of reach and quick response from target respondents (Chiang et al., 2015). Most of the questionnaire will be a closed-ended question where the respondent must select the answer from the 5 Likert scales. The medium that has been used to spread the data collection was WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

Findings

A total 465 respondents' data were usable from 468 respondents, and it has been analyzed using frequency analysis. The characteristics include gender, age group, education, and occupation. A total of 465 respondents' data were analyzed, and the data shows there are large differences between the total number of the gender where female recorded 81.7%, while male-only 18.3%. Next, the majority of the respondent of this study are from the age 18-25 years old, and the minority respondents are from the age 58-65 years old. Then, respondents' employment status who are students is the highest percentage with the recorded 46.5% and then followed by working people with the recorded 42.2%. people who are unemployed and retired both recorded the least number with the record 10.5% and 0.9%.

Spearman's Rho Correlation

Spearman's rho correlation determines the relationships between two variables, and its function with the Pearson correlation coefficient is similar. The usage of spearman rho correlation is because the variables of this study are not normally distributed. Therefore, the Spearman rho correlation approach may be more suited (Hauke et al., 2011).

**Table 1: Spearman's Rho Correlation
Correlations**

		IN	CO	PA	SN	PR
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.629**	.713**	.359**	-.013
	IN Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.779
	N	465	465	465	465	465
	Correlation Coefficient	.629**	1.000	.549**	.397**	.005
	CO Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.914
	N	465	465	465	465	465
	Correlation Coefficient	.713**	.549**	1.000	.322**	-.018
	PA Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.692
	N	465	465	465	465	465
	Correlation Coefficient	.359**	.397**	.322**	1.000	.051
	SN Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.271
	N	465	465	465	465	465
	Correlation Coefficient	-.013	.005	-.018	.051	1.000
	PR Sig. (2-tailed)	.779	.914	.692	.271	.
	N	465	465	465	465	465

a. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The findings of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis were examined using SPSS, as shown in Table I. According to Spearman's Rho correlation method analysis, there is a strong positive relationship between convenience and intention to purchase instant noodles with the correlation coefficient's $r = 0.629$. Then, there is a strong positive relationship between product attributes and intention to purchase instant noodles with the correlation coefficient's $r = 0.713$. Next, there is a moderate positive relationship between subjective norm and intention to purchase instant noodles with the correlation coefficient's $r = 0.359$. Lastly, there is a weak and negative relationship between perceived risk and intention to purchase instant noodles with the correlation coefficient's $r = -0.13$.

Mann-Whitney Test

A Mann-Whitney test has been used for the data analysis where this nonparametric analysis is a substitute for t-test. The Mann-Whitney U test is used to see if two independent groups have a difference in the dependent variable. It compares whether the dependent variable's distribution is the same for the two groups, implying that they are from the same population (Whitney et al., n.d.).

**Table 2: Mann Whitney Test For Gender
Test Statistics^a**

	Intention	Convenience	Product Attribute	Subjective Norms	Perceived Risk
Mann-Whitney U	14722.000	11868.000	15708.000	16141.000	13069.000
Wilcoxon W	87112.000	84258.000	88098.000	19796.000	85459.000
Z	-1.284	-3.834	-.397	-.008	-2.769
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.199	.000	.692	.994	.006

b. Grouping Variable Gender

According to Table 2 shows the Mann Whitney test for gender between convenience, product attribute, subjective norms, perceived risk, and purchase intention. In this test, male (N= 85) and female (N= 380). The test indicates that gender has an insignificant difference (p -value > 0.05) between the factors of convenience, product attribute, subjective norms, and perceived risk, in contrast with the factor of comfort where it recorded a significant difference between gender male and female with the mean rank of male (283.38) and female (221.73).

Discussion

Table 3: Research Hypothesis and The Result of Significant Relationship Levels

Hypothesis	Result
H1 The convenience factor has a significant effect on the intention of the consumers to purchase instant noodles.	Accepted (strong and positive correlation)
H2 The factor of product attributes has a significant effect on the intention of the consumers to purchase instant noodles.	Accepted (strong and positive correlation)
H3 The subjective norms factor has a significant effect on the intention of the consumers to purchase instant noodles.	Accepted (moderate and positive correlation)
H4 The perceived risk factor has a significant effect on the intention of the consumers to purchase instant noodles.	Not Accepted (weak and negative correlation)

Based on the Table 3 show the result of the research hypothesis and the result of significant relationship levels. For hypothesis 1, it was interpreted that the convenience factor has a significant effect on the intention of the consumers to consume instant noodles ($r = 0.629$, $p = 0.00 < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

The present finding confirmed that the convenience factor has a significant and strong positive relationship with the intention of the consumers to purchase instant noodles. this show that the findings of this study were consistent with the result from (Srinivasan & Shende, 2016)(Wales, 2017) where it was concluded that convenience factors has significant relationship on the intention of the consumers to purchase instant noodles. This shows that consumers were attracted to purchase instant noodles because they require fewer preparation skills and require few minutes to prepare (Park et al., 2011). (Tan et al., 2016) stated that the characteristic of convenience of instant noodles can save consumer time and effort has made easier for someone who is not good at cooking and no time to cook. It can be seen that 88.7% of the respondents of this study are among students and working people who might be busy and lack time to cook their meals and lack cooking skills.

Similarly, hypothesis 2 showed that the factor of product attributes has a significant relationship toward the intention of consumers to purchase instant noodles ($r = 0.713$, $p = 0.00 < 0.05$). As a result, the hypothesis was accepted.

The finding of this study confirmed that the factor of product attribute has a significant and strong positive relationship with the intention of consumers to purchase instant noodles. As known instant noodles in the market come in various flavours and packaging, its attribute has influenced consumers to purchase the instant noodles. As supported by a previous study stated that flavour and taste play a significant role in consumer purchase intention (Faheem et al.,

2020). The variety of flavour in the market such as tom yum, curry, chicken flavour, Asam laksa and spicy flavour has made consumer has a variety of flavour to choose from. Other studies from (Harwani, 2020) stated that the packaging design has a significant impact on purchase intention because a good design can attract attention, increase product performance, and create a strong competitive advantage in consumer interest in the product. The variety of packaging of instant noodles, such as plastic cups and bowls, has made it easy to be consumed therefore, it can be concluded that product attributes have a significant relationship towards consumer intention to purchase instant noodles.

In terms of hypothesis 3 revealed that the subjective norms factor has a significant relationship toward the intention of consumers to purchase instant noodles ($r = 0.359$, $p = 0.00 < 0.05$). Hence, the hypothesis was accepted.

The hypothesis was accepted since there is a moderate and positive relationship between subjective norms and the intention of consumers to purchase instant noodles. The past study has reported that family, friends, or neighbours can affect one's behaviour. (Omazic, 2016) supported that when parents indirectly serve instant noodles as comfort food at home, it will influence their children to eat instant noodles. Besides that, friends also play a significant role in influencing others to consume instant noodles. Nowadays, everyone is using social media. When their friends or social influencers upload what they are eating on social media, it may indirectly influence others to try the food. (Eduardsah & Wartaka, 2018) have stated that individuals desire to adapt to a particular behaviour. Hence, it can be concluded that subjective norms in this study have proven to be significant toward the intention of the consumers to consume instant noodles.

Furthermore, hypothesis 4 provides that perceived risk factor has been indicated as an insignificant effect on the intention of the consumers to purchase instant noodles ($r = -0.013$, $p = 0.779 > 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis was not accepted.

The finding has shown that the hypothesis was not supported since there is a weak and negative relationship between perceived risk and the intention of consumers to purchase instant noodles. As known instant noodles are associated with health issues as they contain a lot of carbohydrates, are high in salt, and contain little fibre, vitamins, and minerals. In the past, studies by (Iqbal et al., 2021) have reported that people nowadays are concerned with their food's health and components. In contrast, the previous scholars did not support the result of this study. Therefore, the result of perceived risk in this study has an insignificant effect on the intention of consumers to consume instant noodles. Even though from the normality test, it can be seen from the analysis that some consumers are concerned about the instant noodle's health issues, but some of them think it is safe to be consumed. As supported by the study, (Abraham et al., 2018) stated that even though consumers perceived risk towards the consumption of instant noodles, their behaviour was not linked to their knowledge base. This is because the attributes of instant noodles attracted them. Another possible explanation for the insignificance of perceived risk in the intention to consume instant noodles was most of the respondents in this study were screened to the consumer who purchased and consumed instant noodles. Therefore, it has affected the result where they think instant noodles are safe to eat. This proves that the perceived risk factor is not an important factor in influencing consumers to purchase and consume instant noodles

Conclusion

The present findings reveal that convenience and product attributes are the most important factors in influencing consumer purchase intention toward instant noodles. Apart from that, the factors were analysed as having a strong and positive relationship with the consumer's purchase intention toward instant noodles. Therefore, according to the findings, it can be concluded that consumers are concerned with the attributes of instant noodles such as price, flavour, packaging, and requiring less effort to prepare. Therefore, instant noodles are suitable for those who want to save money, have no time to prepare meals, and lack cooking skills. Furthermore, the findings revealed that generation Z has a higher purchase intention for instant noodles than previous generations.

Unexpectedly, even though instant noodles are often associated with health issues, this finding has revealed that even though consumers' perceived risk toward instant noodles was high, their behaviour was not linked to their knowledge base. This happened because they were attracted by the attributes of instant noodles. This study also discovered that television was the most influential advertising platform that influenced consumers' intention to purchase and consume instant noodles with 84.9%. This is because, in the study by (Lubis, 2018) television advertisements help to improve awareness of the brand through visual and audio cues and are capable of delivering a significant message to the potential customer. Social media such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook are also good advertising mediums to influence consumer purchase intentions toward instant noodles. Nowadays, everyone spends more time on the internet, and everything is easily accessible.

Furthermore, the findings in this study are useful to food developers and food marketers to understand the consumer's purchase intention for instant noodles. As instant noodles were categorized as instant food and ready-to-cook foods, it may be easier for other food products with similar characteristics to instant noodles to use and understand the factors that have been studied in this research. Thus, it will help food developers, and food marketers make a strategic plan based on the findings of this study. Furthermore, this research can help develop a theoretical framework that considers a variety of aspects such as convenience, product attributes, subjective norms, and perceived risk, as well as the intention of the theory of reasoned action model.

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