

Malaysian Coffee Culture: Attributes considered to purchase coffee beverages

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ABSTRACT

Cafés and coffee have played an imperative role in the amelioration of the world's most cosmopolitan cities since their emergence from the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century. Coffee especially plays an imperative role in the city landscape, specifically in Klang Valley, Malaysia. This has led to the growth of many themed cafes in Malaysia. The study aims to investigate the factors affecting consumers' purchase intention towards coffeehouse coffee beverages among consumer in Malaysia. The independent variables include price, brand image, perceived quality, health conscious and atmosphere. To conduct this study, a quantitative approach by using self-administered questionnaire was applied to 200 respondents. The result shows the price and perceived quality is no significant relationship with purchase intention, however the brand image, health conscious and atmosphere will do.

Keywords: *Coffee, Cafes, cafes beverages, themed cafes, Purchase intentions, Perceived quality, Malaysia*

Since coffee was discovered, it had been spread all over the world and had become a common beverage among consumer. Today, coffee has become one of the world most commonly consumed beverages. There is an estimation of 151.3 million of 60 kg coffee bags being consumed in the year 2015 to 2016 (International Coffee Organization, 2016). The foreign cafés values have expressively transformed coffee shops culture in Malaysia. Coffee culture has flourished swiftly through the world that the societies be in part of their regular lives and applies have adapted it. Conferring to Tucker (2011), coffee is a useful ingredient that fills in a culture with social and representative values. Coffeehouse, or coffee shop is defined as café or a place to serve coffee and other refreshment. These coffeehouses serve all types of beverages using coffee as their main ingredient. For instance, mocha, espresso, latte, cappuccino, roasted/brewed coffee and so on. Based on historical record, it was 1475 when the first coffeehouse Kiva Han appears to serve coffee beverages to the public (Paajanen, 2017). Today, there are increasing number of consumers that consume coffee from all age groups. A study done by the International Life Sciences Institute shows that American consumers had started to consume caffeine contained beverages since 2 years old.

Malaysia, a country that was originally a tea-drinking nation, had been influenced by the coffee culture from the west (Lee, 2014). Based on Statista analysis on Malaysian regular beverage consumption in 2016, it had found out that coffee is the most regular beverages consume by Malaysian, which have 60.83% of overall respondent that stated they drink coffee daily. Malaysia is listed as one of the top 50 coffee consumption country where it is

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estimated that 1.3kg of coffee was consumed per capita (Euromonitor International, 2013). The potential growths of Malaysia coffee demand have attracted many local and international businesses to expand their coffeehouse business in this country. As investment rise, the competition against each other also surge significantly. Therefore, we believe that there is a tremendous need to identify the factors that influence consumer purchase intention towards coffeehouse coffee beverages in order to sustain their business in Malaysia. This research aims to study the factors that influence purchase intention among consumers to purchase coffee beverages from the coffeehouse. We believe that the purchase intentions among consumers are affected by price, brand image, perceived quality, health consciousness and coffee houses' atmosphere.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Qahwa” in Arabic means coffee and Ethiopia is deliberate to be the origin of the coffee culture. Coffee then journeyed to Turkey through the Arabian Peninsula and reached in the European region following Venetian traders (Bellismo, 2008). The first ever coffee house was opened in Constantinople (1554) and coffeehouses mushroomed widely, becoming a hub for knowledge discussion. In 1600, coffee voyages to Western Europe and North America where people acknowledged coffee as an alternative to beer and it starts to inspire the industrial world for Europe, since caffeine is said to be able to wake up the brain (Hearst, 2008).

Malaysian coffee culture originates by commercialising kopitiams and labelling of the local coffee shops to elevation amenities by espousal technology as part of the publicising strategies to entice younger generations. The coffee culture in Malaysia is said to be different from the European as which Malaysian are more influenced by tea as main brew, thanks to the British occupation carrying their culture into the country. Malaysian coffee shops have started at least in the early 1900 and has been one of the main meeting points for local to share thoughts and having conversation elsewhere than home. As part of local tradition, Malaysians relish coffee or tea when visiting relatives or neighbours (Williamson, 2006).

Kim and Kim (2004) delineated purchase intention as the propensity of buyers with the identified intention where it is typically measured in terms of real purchasing. Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2001) explained that what is cross in the customers' mind signified intention to purchase by them, after a research done. Moreover, preceding studies (Pi et al., 2011; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004) have found that purchase intention as a vital element that effects buyers' genuine buying behaviour and may stimulate transaction actions in the future.

At present, customers are the core of all business sectors. Hence, the choices of customers will have emotional impact on the existence businesses. Consequently, apprehending the lifestyles of customers on coffee beverages purchasing is essential for coffee business in refining their business stratagems. Coffee drinking is a unique culture, and the habits of coffee drinkers varies across countries. Grounded on those truths, the purpose of this study is to explore the various factors that influence the coffee beverages purchase intention and in Malaysia.

Hypothesis Development

Purchase intention of consumers is highly influenced by the price (Cham, Lim, Aik, & Tay, 2016; Smith & Carsky, 1996). Price is the foremost factor and it is highly concerned by researchers to find out the impact of a price towards consumer purchase intention. Thus, many researchers have extensively studied the topic. Erickson & Johansson (1985) and Brucks, Zeithaml, and Naylor (2007) contended that product price is affecting consumer purchase intention because it is used by consumers as indicator of a product or services. Tellis & Gaeth (1990) had proposed that high price can influence consumer purchase intention positively because of consumer perception that a high price product is a product with quality and able to perform better. On the other hand, product price affects consumer purchase intention in another way where consumer's purchase intention will be affected where a product is having price reduction promotion (Pulligadda & DelVecchio, 2012). In short, the study had stated that a price will be influencing consumer purchase intention.

Price is the amount of money consumers would provide in exchange a product or services (Kotler, 2004). Price is a tool to notify customers the value of the products. The relationship between a price and purchase intention has been examined by many researchers and majority agreed that it is positively related. Smith and Carsky (1996) and Sulu, Saerang and Massie (2016) described price as an important issue on persuading the customers in buying decision making. Kotler and Keller (2006) claimed that price able to provoke the customer's purchase intention.

The brand image can be defined as the way people view a product (Rana, Osman & Othman, 2015). A product brand image is the image perception or memory that connected with and assemble in the mind of consumers towards the particular product and its brand (Aaker, 1991; Cham, Lim & Aik, 2015; Cham et al., 2016; Lim & Cham, 2015). Nevertheless, Kotler (2001) indicated that the individual's beliefs, ideas, and impression regarding to an object can also be defined as the brand image. The features public always linked with the brand could be variety of attribution and associations, depends on the degree of it brand strength, favourability and uniqueness (Keller, 1993; Biel, 1993). Consequently, customers would process this information and generate either positive or negative feeling towards the brand's product. Customers might have purchase intention outcome and provide a guideline to choose the most consistency fit between the product features with the consumer needs. Hence, several researchers agreed that brand image is an imperative element towards purchase intention (Huang and Hoang, 2014). As a result, marketers always emphasis on the brand image of the products that is appealing to the customers. Aaker (1991) stated that the brand image also functioned as a key to differentiate the brand from its competitors.

According to Lancester (1971) and Caruna, Money and Berthon (2000), perceived quality is a set of attributes perform a certain level of quality which offers the effectiveness to customers. Perceived benefits are the separate characteristics of goods which include intrinsic or extrinsic and tangible or intangible and others that have related to the specific purchase and status to use (Cham & Easvaralingam, 2012; Cham et al., 2018; Lim, Cham & Sia, 2018). In the past, authors considered the perceived quality concept and perceived value as similar, and this has implied some of the researchers failed to identify the concept between perceived quality and perceived value (Caruana et al, 2000).

According to Becker, Maiman, Kirscht, Haefner and Drachman (1977), health consciousness leads people to involve in healthy lifestyle. Jindabot (2015) explained that health

consciousness is about how individual take notes on his or her health. He also indicated that health conscious can be acknowledged as personal health awareness, like individual attention, obligation to be healthy. According to Phan and Mai (2016), health consciousness initiated purchase intention of food. Musdiana, Siti Meriam, Etty Harniza, Muna and Mohd Rizaimy (2010) also elucidate that health conscious have positive relationship with purchase intention.

Store atmosphere, a transfer of image that best describe the characteristic of the retail stores to the potential customers. Store atmosphere also can be explained as the merge of the physical and technological elements, environmental and design factor and other qualifications to build an image and make it more unique (Sezgin & Küçüköylü, 2014). The atmosphere is a word of appearance to apply and illustrate our emotion towards the shopping experience which cannot be notified by eyes (Milliman, 1986). Hussain and Ali (2015) clarified that the atmosphere is a layout of the retail chain store can bring about particular sentimental influence on the purchaser that reinforce his or her purchase feasibility.

The hypotheses are as follows:

- H1:** There is a significant relationship between price and purchase intention of coffeehouse coffee beverages among consumers in Malaysia.
- H2:** There is a significant relationship between brand image and purchase intention of coffeehouse coffee beverages among consumers in Malaysia.
- H3:** There is a significant relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention of coffeehouse coffee beverages among consumers in Malaysia.
- H4:** There is a significant relationship between health conscious and purchase intention of coffeehouse coffee beverages among consumers in Malaysia.
- H5:** There is a significant relationship between atmosphere and purchase intention of coffeehouse coffee beverages among consumers in Malaysia.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, a self-administered questionnaire was designed while the instrument used to measure the constructs is adapted from the literature. Each question item is set with a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire is divided into two parts: part one focuses on the respondent's demographic variables, such as age, gender, monthly income and other personal information. The second part contains questions regarding the constructs proposed in the study. The items related to price are adapted from Lim, Poon, Tee and Thamil (2014) and Cheng, Wee, Leow and Yeo (2014); the items related to brand image is adapted from Tee, Chan and Behroozi, (2013); Cheng, Wee, Leow and Yeo (2014) and Lim, Poon, Tee and Thamil (2014). The items for perceived quality are adapted from Khadilkar (2012); Arshad (2014); Jooyeon Ha (2010) and Jones (2011). The items for health conscious are taken from Kulikovski (2010); Mashigo (2014) and Buaprommee (2016). The items for atmosphere are taken from Hussain, Riaz, Ali and Mazhar (2015), while the items for purchase intention are taken from Lim, Poon, Tee and Thamil (2014); Mai (2016) and Chao & Liao (2016).

A total of 200 coffee drinkers was selected as respondents from cafés in the suburban townships with 54% female respondents and 46% male respondents. About 56.5% of the respondents were below 25 years old follow by 18.5% fall into age between 26 – 34 years old. Others were above 35 years old. Finding indicated that 41% of the respondents purchase coffee beverages from coffeehouses within once or twice a month and 23% of respondents purchase coffee beverages from coffeehouses at least once a week. The remaining was seasoned customers that may only purchase coffee beverages from coffeehouses one or twice a year.

Cronbach's Alpha test was used to measure the internal consistency of the six variables with a total of 35 items: Price (five items), Brand image (five items), Perceived quality (10 items), Health conscious (five items), Atmosphere (five items) and Purchase intention (five items). The value of Cronbach's Alpha of is price 0.762, the brand image is 0.822, perceived quality is 0.899, health conscious is 0.764, the atmosphere is 0.884 and purchase intention is 0.773. All the variables had alpha value more than 0.7. Concur with the rules of thumb based on George and Mallery (2003), all the 6 variables exceeded the minimum acceptable level. Thus, the instruments used to test the variables in this study showed a good level reliability.

RESULTS

The relationship between the five antecedents and purchase intentions were determined through a multiple regression analysis (refer Table 1). There is significant positive relationship between brand image, health conscious and atmosphere on purchase intentions. Therefore, O2, O4 and O5 are supported with the significant outcomes. As for O1 and O3, the results indicated no significant relationship between price and perceived quality toward purchase intention ($p>0.05$). The value of R^2 indicated that 41.2% of the independent variables contributed to the dependent variable of purchase intention.

Table 1: The Relationship between the Five Antecedents and Purchase Intention

Independent variables	Dependent Variable (Purchase Intention)			
	Beta	t	Sig.	Outcome
Price	.054	0.884	0.378	Not significant
Brand Image	.406	6.981	0.000	Significant
Perceived quality	-.034	-0.442	0.659	Not significant
Health Conscious	.189	3.039	0.003	Significant
Atmosphere	.277	3.685	0.000	Significant
R^2			0.412	
F			28.405	

DISCUSSIONS

The finding presented that there was no significant relationship between price and purchase intention on coffeehouses' coffee beverages among consumers in Malaysia. This finding was in line with conclusion drawn by Mirabi, Akbariyeh and Tahmasebifard (2015) where they discovered that price is not significant on purchase intention as when the price of the product is too high, consumer will choose not to consider the company product. Various studies revealed that price promotion did not influence purchase intention but noted that both brand

image and product knowledge were the key features to determine consumers' purchase intention (Eze, Yee and Wamala 2012; Lin, Lee and Chen 2012; Yang, Lee, Lin, and Zhen, 2013). Besides, the external factors exist in the coffeehouses may be more significant to influence purchase intention instead of the price. Rachel (2014) reported that the consumer that prefer comfortable environment with nice aroma will not be sensitive to the price tag of the coffee beverages selling at the coffee house.

Concurred with the studies from Muhammad, Hamad and Shabir (2014) on brand image and purchase intention, this research also revealed that brand image is statistically significant towards the purchase intention on coffeehouses' coffee beverages among consumers in Malaysia. The highest beta value (0.406) on the brand image variable (as shown in table 1) implied that brand image is the most prominent factor to determine purchase intention among other independent variables. Brand image is perception or memory about the brand that ingrain in the mind of the consumer (Aaker, 1991). A decent brand image will be able to catch a position in the mind of the consumer and this mental "position" must be distinctive enough and able to represent the uniqueness the brand has to offer (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2015). This finding was consistent with many studies (e.g. Cham, Ng, Lim & Cheng, 2018; Chen & Chang, 2010; Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2012; Hsu, 2000; Koh & Fang, 2012), where their findings revealed that a product with high reputation brand name will become an attraction point to intensify purchase intention. Beil (1992) proposed that consumer's collective brand image towards a product is generally grounded on three elements, which are corporate image, user image and product image. These elements can contribute greatly to intensify brand image in the mind of the consumer particularly if it had high favourability, strength, and distinctiveness (Tariq, Nawaz, and Butt, 2013). Additionally, products name, appearance, features and packaging are also playing a crucial role toward the perception of the brand's image (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2015) for a consumer.

Perceived quality, however, did not show a significant relationship towards purchase intention on coffeehouses coffee beverages among consumers in this study. Past studies on the influence between perceived quality and purchase intention are inconclusive and may require further exploration for future research. For instance, the findings from Chi, Yeh and Yang (2009) revealed that perceived quality have direct effect on purchase intention, Wu, Yeh and Hsiao (2011) shown indirect effect and Siahaan, Pangemanan and Pandowo (2014) found an inverse relationship between the two variables. Coherent with the finding in this study were Cronin and Taylor (1992) and Chiew, Shoki, Zakuan and Naquib (2014) where they illustrated that perceived quality was not a significant factor to affect customers' purchase intention.

Health conscious is found to be statistically significant to influence purchase intention on coffeehouses coffee beverages among consumers in this study. This finding was corresponded with many past studies (e.g. Achchuthan & Velnampy, 2016; Salleh, Ali, Harun, Jalil & Shaharudin, 2010; Shaharudin, Pani, Mansor, Eliasand & Sadek, 2010) which proves that health consciousness is an element that can enhance purchase intention. This is justifiable as consumers with high awareness on healthy life and its benefit will tend to purchase the product that serves its needs and expectations.

This research also concluded a significant finding in term of relationship between atmosphere and purchase intention of coffeehouse coffee beverages among customers in Malaysia. According to Hussain and Ali (2015), major atmospheric variables such as scent, cleanliness and lighting will strongly influence purchase intention of the customer. Besides, music and the colour combination in the shop may also play a vital role. Liao, Huang and Deeseentham (2012) proposed that customers' purchase intention have positive relationship with the ambience of the store, specifically if the store was able to provide a comfortable and relax environments to improve the

mood and joyful feeling to the consumer. A comfortable and peaceful environment can serve as a motivation factor for consumers to stay awake either to work or to relax on weekend (Huang and Dang, 2014).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research study aims to provide a detail finding for practitioners to deliberate in order to withstand their business in the coffeehouse industry. Coffee culture had been spread worldwide and more competitors had entered the market. The outcomes of this study offer valuable comprehensions about Malaysia consumers who have a positive attitude towards purchasing coffee beverages. The results of this study can benefit coffee suppliers to recover the customer strategies. Moreover, in order to build competitive advantages in the coffee beverages industry, coffee suppliers should have strong and unique actions of promotion.

The results reveal that price and perceived quality showed no significant relationship with purchase intention of coffeehouse coffee beverages among customers in Malaysia. As discussed by Cheng et al. (2014), price did not influence the coffee purchase intention as customers tend to be influenced by other factors such as brand knowledge. Harith, Ting and Zakaria (2014) testified that thoughts varied on the notion of price. Certain people are keen to pay for quality however some base their purchasing judgement on whatever is the cheapest. Perceived quality is also not an imperative factor on consumers purchase intention. The environment changes hastily and affected many industries. Customers may accentuate on self-service system in coffeehouse nowadays. The rapid response and save time for consumers may attract more consumers to purchase coffee beverages from coffeehouse. Customers can serve themselves without wasting time to queue for a cup of coffee. The education and satisfaction level among consumers are increasing, so different consumers may expect various different types of the coffeehouse quality which can meet their expectation.

On the other hand, this research found that brand image, health consciousness and atmosphere have a significant relationship with purchase intention of coffeehouses' coffee beverages among customers in Malaysia. Customers purchase intention will increase if coffeehouses devote extra effort to position a good image in the customers' mind set, especially a favourable, strong and unique brand image. Customers now are presented with a wide range of selection of products and services, hence coffeehouses must uphold a strong and unique brand image to cater to the customers. Brand image also able to lift customers' self-confidence towards products under specific brand, thus increase their purchase intention (Chao et al, 2016). Coffeehouses should also issue advertisements to stimulate their core competencies and brand among customers. This is due to the fact that customers tend to purchase coffee beverages from the brand of coffeehouses that they familiar with. Social Medias such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and others should be used in marketing activities as customers nowadays are influenced by the Internet.

In addition, most of the customers will explore and collect information on health ailment. Referring to Kara Godfrey (2017) study, coffee beverages can help burn more calories. Customers believed that with right consumption, coffee beverages will help to keep weight under control. Conferring with Emanuel (2017), coffee can help increase longevity. Hence, people believed that those who drink coffee beverages recurrently are healthier. Therefore, customers are confidence that coffee beverages will bring more benefits. Coffee shops include in new beverages in their menus such as organic coffee for the health conscious customers. The atmosphere of a coffeehouse will also influence consumers' purchase intention. Clean, comfy and

interesting coffeehouses will attract customers to visit more. A satisfying atmosphere with relaxing music background can influence customers to spend more time there, and subsequently turn them into regular or repeat customers to the coffeehouses. Conversely, poor quality and loud music will cause submissive experiences to the customers. The aroma of coffee is also an element that can stimulate customers' purchase intention, as enlightened by Seo (2008), effects of the coffee aroma can help to wake up genes.

CONCLUSION

This article intends to explore the reasons that affect consumer's intention to purchase coffee products in Malaysia. Two hundred participants received the questionnaire. They came from different age range. According to the results, brand image, health conscious and atmosphere were the main factors to influence consumer's intention to purchase coffee at coffeehouses. To sum up, according to the analysis, those who want to set up coffeehouses might want to consider the brand image of the coffeehouses, product benefits to fulfil the expectation of customers who are health conscious, and offering better atmosphere.

For future research directions, it is recommended the following: (1) if replicating this research model, it is proposed to use a moderating variable for the influence of purchase intention resulting with trust in product repurchasing. For example, the characteristics of respondents or a pricing variable can be used as a moderating variable; (2) taking into account any other control variable; and (3) focus only on specific demographic or socio-economic groups of people or the population in general.

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