

Factors Contributing to Perak's Youth Buying Behavior During the Covid-19 Endemic Phase

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Abstract

People's lives have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. It has changed the pattern of human life and forced people to change their lives. The government of Malaysia has enacted a 14-day Movement Control Order (MCO) to stop the spread of the Covid-19 outbreak. Resulting, people were staying home, which has made online shopping very popular. As the situation improves, Malaysia has shifted from a pandemic to an endemic stage. Therefore, this research aims to understand youth buying behavior at the endemic stage of Covid-19. Also, to identify the relationship between factors and the gratification of youth's buying behavior. The quantitative research method was used for this study, and an online survey was distributed to 356 Perak residents between the ages of 15 and 24. The purposive sampling method was used. The findings identified three major factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior among youth in the Covid 19 endemic phase: psychological, economic, and social factors. All hypotheses are consistent with earlier research and findings and show a positive relationship between factors and the gratification of youth purchasing behavior. According to the results, most respondents are students without income who enjoy and are satisfied with visiting online stores due to influences such as family and friends and price discounts.

Keywords: Buying behavior; Psychological factor; Social factor; Economic factor

1. Introduction

The first coronavirus case in Malaysia was discovered on January 25, 2020 (Hashim et al., 2021) and the pandemic has affected everyone's lives in one way or another. The Malaysian government has issued a Movement Control Order (MCO) to create a social barrier where only one person is allowed to leave the house during the day to get the essentials they need, hoping that this method will end the spread of the virus and stop the outbreak. In addition, only a few strictly necessary businesses are allowed to be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Isa et al., (2020).

As a result of being forced to stay at home, online shopping has grown in popularity. Research indicated that online purchases across most product categories have increased by 6 to 10 percent in Covid -19 pandemic. Digital entertainment and beauty rose to over 50%, with personal care seeing the most significant rise (Covid 19 has changed online shopping forever, survey shows, 2020). According to Edmunds et al. (2010), college students aged 18 to 30 mostly shop online, even though they might need more money to splurge.

However, Malaysia entered the endemic phase starting on April 1, 2022, and the nation's borders and business and social engagement restrictions have been reopened. Online spending increased by 49% during the COVID-19 endemic phase, and RHB Banking Group

recently experienced a 9% quarterly increase in value. It demonstrates that many Malaysians continue buying online, increasing spending. This information shows that online shopping is still relevant and used by Malaysians. Furthermore, different buying behaviours will be influenced by various factors, and consumers may face multiple challenges while shopping online.

Three factors influence consumer purchasing behaviour that can be identified: economic, psychological, and social aspects. Hence, this research will mainly focus on the relationship between factors and the gratification of youth's buying behaviour during the Covid-19 endemic phase.

Objectives

- To identify the relationship between economic factors and the gratification of youth's buying behavior during the Covid-19 endemic phase.
- To identify the relationship between psychological factors and the gratification of youth's buying behavior during the Covid-19 endemic phase.
- To identify the relationship between social factors and the gratification of youth's buying behavior during the Covid-19 endemic phase.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between economic factors that gratify the consumer buying behaviour among youth in the Covid-19 endemic phase?
- What is the relationship between psychological factors that gratify consumer purchasing behaviour among youth on e-commerce in the Covid-19 endemic phase?
- What is the relationship between social factors that gratify the consumer buying behaviour among youth in the Covid-19 endemic phase?

Hypotheses

- H1: There is a positive relationship between psychological factors and the gratification of youth buying behaviour.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between social factors and the gratification of youth buying behaviour in e-commerce.
- H3: There is a positive relationship between economic factors and the gratification of youth buying behaviour.

2. Literature Review

The fundamental theory of U & G (Uses and Gratification Theory) is that users utilize media to satisfy their needs and provide the most significant volume of pleasure (Lariscy et al., 2011). The Uses and Gratification Theory analyses e-commerce and provides a theoretical framework and a technique to understand consumers' attitudes and intentions on using the Internet as a mode for purchasing items. It is based on a prior study by Lim and Ting (2012). They tried to explain how the causes and functions of such behaviour shape customer attitudes and intentions about online shopping. Academics strongly encourage Uses and Gratification Theory applications in social media marketing to consider customers' preferences (Corrada et al., 2020). In addition, according to a researcher, the Uses and

Gratification Theory proposed four aspects that influence media use and effects: the social context, psychological circumstances, needs, motives, and expectations towards mediated communication (Haridakis and Hanson, 2009).

Consumer buying behavior is how consumers satisfy their needs and wants by selecting, acquiring, using, and disposing of products, ideas, and services. Consumer behaviour can be concluded as a series of actions a consumer takes that lead to decision-making processes in online purchases at e-commerce stores, particularly by students. These actions include gathering information about products, purchasing, consuming, and evaluating them (Amsari and Sari, 2022).

Since the outbreak, young consumers' buying habits have significantly changed (Mehta et al., 2020). The rapid advancement of information technology and e-commerce has changed the consumer shopping culture. Customers can now shop from home, receive deliveries to their homes, and pay online via credit card or bank transfer (Chew and Wee, 2021). Consumers choose brands, products, and services daily, and many must know the factors influencing their decisions.

The first factor that affects consumer purchasing behavior is the economic factor. Economic factors always have a considerable influence on the consumer. Price is an important consideration when purchasing in this marketing revolution era, and price influences people's brand awareness (Albari and Safitri, 2018). According to Satit et al. (2012), price is typically the only factor influencing consumers' purchasing decisions.

The second factor that affects consumer purchasing behavior is the psychological factor. Motivation, perception, attitude, learning, and personality are classified as internal individual variables (Tan and Goh, 2018). The primary elements influencing women's internet purchases were similarly discovered to be psychological ones.

The third factor that affects consumer purchasing behavior is the social factor. Dörtyol et al., (2018) revealed that social factors affect consumer behaviour according to the group, socialization, social class, status, and roles. Social factors affect purchasing decisions because everyone is concerned with how others see them (Khaniwale, 2015). For instance, social media has become an increasingly important source of information and influence for consumers and can significantly impact their purchasing decisions (Sijabat et al., 2022). Also, when making purchases, social group is always an important consideration. A group directly impacts an individual is called a membership group (Qazzafi, 2020). Some individuals will follow the group to show they are not left behind. For example, instead of paper notes, most university students now use tablets in class. Hence, the student will refer to and follow the group using the tablet since it is more convenient than a paper note. As a result, people will be influenced by the group while making purchases.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

This study uses a quantitative approach to gather information on the relationship between factors and the gratification of youth's purchasing behaviour during the Covid-19 endemic phase.

The questionnaire is segmented into five sections. The first section consists of demographic questions. The second section contains questions about consumer buying behaviour, adopted and adapted from various researchers, including Shaizatulaqma et al.

(2018), Ashoer et al. (2022), and Jiang et al. (2013). A 5-point Likert Scale was used to gauge psychological, social, and economic factors.

G*Power was used to estimate the research sample size. After calculating, the total sample size estimated for this research is 327. Purposive sampling is used in this study. The pilot test has 28 items to test on four variables for the Cronbach's Alpha test from the 24 respondents within the reliability test. Table 1 shows that every variable has met the alpha value. According to the rule of George et al. (2003), Cronbach's alpha > .9 = Excellent, > .8 = Good, > .7 = Acceptable, > .6 = Questionable, > .5 = Poor, and < .5 = Unacceptable. That means all variables from this research are acceptable, and the researchers can continue collecting data.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N. of items
Consumer Buying Behavior	.709	8
Economic Factor	.814	6
Psychological Factor	.768	8
Social Factor	.847	6

3. Results

The researchers collected 356 responses. However, 29 respondents were considered invalid responses. They chose 'others' since this research study aims at the target audience in the Perak area. The data were analysed using SPSS.

The data shows that the youngest age group, 15-16, represents only 3.4% of the respondents, while the next group, 17-18, represents 6.8%. The largest age group in the data is 21-22, representing 48.2% of the respondents. The second-largest group is 19-20, representing 24.8% of the respondents. The final group, 23-24, represents 16.9% of the respondents. Male respondents comprised 34.9%, while females comprised 65.1%.

Most of the respondents, 77.7%, have no income. 11% earn less than RM1000, while 8.5% earn between RM1000 to RM3000. Only a small percentage, 1.4%, earns between RM3000 to RM5000, and another 1.4% earns RM5000 and above. The distribution of ethnic groups is as follows: Malay at 3.4%, Chinese at 89.3%, Indian at 3.9% and lastly, others at 3.4%.

91.3% of respondents are students, 7.3% have full-time jobs, 7% have part-time jobs, and 2.3% stated others as their employment status.

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient is used to test the hypotheses. To summarise, all the factors and variables from factors are computed into mean and get the result of Table 2. The highest r-value from the table above shows ($r = 0.605$, $p = 0.00$) which falls under economic factor. Meanwhile, the psychological factor ($r = 0.549$, $p = 0.00$) is higher than the social factor ($r = 0.403$, $p = 0.00$).

Table 2: Overall factors and the gratifications of consumer buying behavior on e-commerce

		Economic Factor	Psychological Factor	Social Factor
Consumer Buying	Pearson Correlation	.605**	.549**	.403**

Behavior	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	326	326	326

4. Discussion

Based on the results presented, the hypothesis that there is a significant positive relationship between psychological factors and the gratification of consumer buying behaviour is supported. This implies that psychological factors such as motivation, personality, and perception significantly impact the gratification of consumer buying behaviour. The findings are also consistent with previous studies that consumers tend to shop online, although they have concerns about privacy and the quality of products (Mohd Zulfakar and Samihatunnadzirah, 2021). Manorama et al. (2019) research also indicated that most consumers typically stick to one online shopping platform to purchase products. The results of this study display information on the role of psychological factors in gratifying consumer buying behaviour. The Uses and Gratifications Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how consumers seek gratification from online shopping and make selective choices based on their needs and preferences. Moreover, the Uses and Gratifications Theory also proposes that individuals are selective in their media choices and use media that gratify their needs. Consumers may choose specific online platforms that best gratify their needs and preferences in online shopping.

There is a significant positive relationship between the social factor and the gratification of consumer buying behaviour on e-commerce. The findings indicate that the opinions and perceptions of notable individuals such as family and friends positively impact youth's intention for online purchases and influence their buying behaviour. The opinions of consumers who are crucial to them will impact consumers' desires to make purchases online. It implies that the perception of significant individuals, such as family and friends, positively impacts youth intention for online purchases and influences their buying behaviour. This study's findings suggest that individuals actively choose media to gratify their needs and desires which aligns with the Uses and Gratification Theory. The study found that social factors play a significant role in satisfying consumers' needs and desires in e-commerce. Therefore, social factors can be considered one of the gratifications consumers seek through e-commerce. The study's findings can guide marketers and advertisers to create content that targets social factors to satisfy consumers' needs and desires.

The results indicated that discounts and promotions significantly influenced consumers' online purchasing behaviour. The findings are similar to the study conducted by Manorama et al. (2019) which showed that consumers typically compare the prices offered by different online shopping platforms before buying. They are more incentivized to purchase the products at the lowest and best price. However, Mohamad Shariff and Abd Hamid (2021) indicated that consumers need to be aware of the total amount spent due to the convenience of the payment method. As the e-wallet payment method is simple to understand and use and makes transactions speedy and more straightforward, some consumers might need to know the total amount they have spent online. The Uses and Gratifications Theory suggests that individuals actively choose media to gratify their needs and desires. The study found that the economic factor, including discounts and low prices, satisfies consumers' needs and desires in e-commerce. Therefore, the economic factor can be considered one of the gratifications consumers seek through e-commerce.

The study's findings can guide marketers and advertisers in creating content targeting the economic factor to satisfy consumers' needs and desires.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Most of the participants in this study were Chinese, which does not accurately reflect public perceptions of other ethnic groups. Also, most respondents are from specific areas like Kampar, Kinta, and Kuala Kangsar. Therefore, the results are unable to represent the entire Perak State. Purposive sampling from the population's many ethnic groups can be used to ensure that Malay, Indian, and other minority groups are represented. This will make it possible to have a more profound knowledge of how various ethnic groups interact in a multi-ethnic society and how cultural values and perspectives may differ between multiple ethnic groups.

Secondly, future research should strive for a more geographically balanced strategy to overcome the problem of sample bias based on specific regions. This can be accomplished by randomly selecting participants from a more extensive range of areas within the research region.

The primary goal of this study is to identify the association between factors and the gratification of youth buying habits throughout the Covid-19 endemic phase. It was discovered that most respondents are between 19 and 24, and the majority are female.

In conclusion, about 39.6% of the respondents made purchases during the endemic phase. This research found that during the endemic phase, most youth often make purchases online as it is more convenient for them and will purchase a product due to the influence of family and friends. The research also shows that pricing discounts are associated with youth buying behavior. Most of the youth enjoy and are satisfied with online shopping platforms. They switched from physical to online shopping due to the influence of the people around them and mostly buy from an online shopping platform that has been recommended to them by people they know. As a result, all economic, psychological, and social factors substantially affect their buying habits.

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