

Automobile Purchase Intention of Consumers in a Multiracial Society: A Hierarchical Regression Analysis Model

Wong Ming Wong
Shantou University

Hao Fan Mo
Jinwen University of Science and Technology

The purpose of this study was to examine the purchase intention of consumers who are interested in purchasing an automobile in a multiracial and multicultural society. The study utilized the Theory of Reasoned Action Model to explore whether there is a correlation between the gender, age, income, and race of consumers and their intention to purchase an automobile. The study adopted a hierarchical regression analysis model via online survey. The result of the study indicated that the purchase intention of consumers in a multi-racial society was affected by their income and race.

The objective of this study is to identify what influences the purchase intention of automobile consumers in a multiracial and multicultural society. The geographic focus of the Study is situated in the City of Kuala Lumpur in the country of Malaysia. Given that Kuala Lumpur is a diverse and multi-racial country at the crossroads of the Pacific Rim, it seemed a logical choice to conduct this study on the purchase intention of automobile consumers in a multi-racial society. Since the study concerns itself with consumer behavior, then a correlation analysis of demographic variables of consumers in Malaysia is also conducted.

Researchers Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan (2004, p. 9) define consumer behavior “as individuals or groups acquiring, using, and disposing of products, services, ideas, or experiences.” Similarly, Schiffman and Kanuk (2007, p. 3) define consumer behavior as “the behavior that display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of product and services that they expect will satisfy they need.” Researchers Kotler and Keller (2006) have found that cultural, social, and personal factors influence consumer behavior. Research conducted by Peter and Olson (2008) conclude in their study that consumer behavior consists of four elements that interact with each other: (a) behavior, (b) affect and cognition, (c) environment, and (d) marketing strategy. Furthermore, the definition of the behavior and intention of consumers as defined by Peter and Olson (2008) state that consumer behavior is a direct action to purchase some things at a particular time. Consumer intention concerns itself with purchasing something in the future. Based on this research, this study adopts the “theory of reasoned action” model as developed by Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975 which will be used to explore the correlation between consumer demographic variables and the purchase intention of automobile consumers in Malaysia, which is a multiracial and multicultural society.

BACKGROUND

The problem statement of the study concerns itself with how to identify consumers with a high intention to purchase an automobile in Malaysia. There are two parts to the problem statement that need to be explored to better understand the purchase intention of automobile consumers. One is from the view of automobile manufacturers, which is how do identify consumers? In other words, for automobile manufacturers it is very important to their success to know which consumer would have a high intention to purchase a new automobile. In this way they could structure their marketing strategy in a way that would help them generate profit, increase market share, and remain competitive in a global automobile market. In addition, automobile manufacturers would benefit from knowing what factors of consumer behavior would more accurately forecast the purchase intention of their consumers. Furthermore, purchasing an automobile is different from the purchase of other consumer products such as electronic products or clothing, because automobiles are considered durable products (Portolese Dias, 2004). Thus, the study concerned itself with demographic factors of automobile consumers.

The other is that from the view of international business explores the automobile market situation. The automobile industry is a huge industry that involves other industries such as steel, electronics, plastics, insurance, and financial services. The automobile industry is a global industry that includes developing countries such as South Korea (Hyundai and Kia) and China (Chery, Dongfeng, and Fengshen) with their own national automobile brands. For example, in 2008, Hyundai (2.7%) and Kia (1.6%) had a combined market share of 4.3% in the United States (Woodyard, 2010). In 2009, they increased their market share to 7.1% (Woodyard, 2010). Therefore, understanding the purchase intention of automobile consumers would help automobile manufacturers in their marketing efforts to sell their automobiles. To provide an insight into the purchase intention of consumers in a globalized society, this study focused on the automobile consumer in Malaysia, which is a country that is (a) a multiracial and multicultural society and (b) has a large consumer automobile market.

Malaysia is a multiracial and multicultural society consisting of Malay, Chinese and Indian as three major race groups and cultures. According the report of *Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristics 2010* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012; Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2011), the number of population is 28.3 million in 2010 Census and consists of 91.8% is Malaysian citizens and 8.2% is non-citizens. The percentage of ethnic group has divided into 67.4 % of Malays and Indigenous, 24.6% of Chinese, 7.3% of Indians, and 0.7% of others. The Malaysian population can be subdivided into 61.3% Muslim, 19.8% Buddhist, 9.2% Christian, and 6.3% of Hinduism. The population of Kuala Lumpur is 1.67 million and makes up 5.9% of the national population of Malaysia. The population of Kuala Lumpur consists of 91% Malaysian citizens and 9% of non-citizens. The percentage of ethnic group consist of 46% Malay and Indigenous, 43% Chinese, 10% Indian, 1% others.

Second, the number of automobiles sold in Malaysia has been increasing recently. The Malaysia Automobile Institute reported 407,007 new automobiles were sold in 2009 and in 2010 the number of new automobiles soled increased to 414,539. Also, for the first six-months of 2011 the number of automobiles sold totaled 265,138, which if the trend continues the annual total may exceed 500,000 vehicles for 2011 (Hazrina Hassan Khalep, personal communication, December 14, 2011). The top five automobile brands sold in 2010 were (a) Perodua (146,708 units), (b) Proton (130,173 units), (c) Toyota (51,792 units), (d) Honda (37,026 units), and (e) Nissan (7,901 units). These top five brands consist of 90% of the automobile market in Malaysia in 2010. Therefore, from the perspective of automobile manufacturers and dealers it would help them if they know what consumer characteristics they should be aware of so they can focus their efforts on those consumers who have a high intention to purchase an automobile in their multiracial and multicultural society. Therefore, this study utilizes the demographic factors of consumers to better understand the correlation between these factors and the purchase intention of potential consumers in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers have explored consumer behavior utilizing the Theory of Reasoned Action Model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Peter and Olson (2008, p. 152) indicated, “according to the theory of reasoned action, predicating consumers’ purchase behavior is a matter of measuring their intention to buy just before the make a purchase.” For instance, Malhotra and McCort (2001) analyzed the impact of culture on consumer behavior utilizing the Theory of Reasoned Action. They collected data from a population sample of 215 undergraduate business student from Hong Kong and 225 undergraduate business students from the United States. They concluded, “The behavioral intention framework is applicable across cultures, yet it must be operationalized with distinctive thought process of each culture in mind” (2001, p. 235). Therefore, Malhorta and McCort found it useful to utilize the Theory of Reasoned Action Model for their study to explore the impact of culture on consumer behavior.

Regarding the impact demographic factors have on consumer behavior, Hawkins, Mothersbaugh, and Best (2007, p. 116) described demographics as “a population in terms of its size, distribution, and structure.” In addition, many researchers have confirmed that demographic factors of consumers have influenced their purchase intention and behavior (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan, 2004; Hawkins et al., 2007; Kotler & Keller, 2006; Peter & Olson, 2008; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007) in terms of product catalogs (Malhotra & McCort, 2001; Shahabuddin, 2009; Xu, 2000). Research has also shown that gender is a demographic factor that influences consumer behavior. For example, research by Hawkins, Mothersbaugh, & Best, in 2007 and Kotler & Keller in 2006 found that due to the different values, attitudes, and perceptions, male and female consumers have dissimilar respondents, intention, or behavior.

Age of consumers is another demographic factor that influences consumer behavior. For instance, Menkhaus, Pingetzer, Whipple, and Field (1990) researched how demographic factors of consumers relate to the intention of purchasing beef. The result showed that the age of consumers affected their intention to purchase beef more than their income and education level. The age range was divided into two ranges: (a) ages were between 21 and 44, and (b) ages older than 45 years of age. The research showed consumers who were older than 45 years of age purchased less beef than those who were younger than 45 years of age. This phenomenon was due to older consumers eating less beef due to health reasons related to high cholesterol and overeating.

Another similar research conducted on the age of consumers was carried out by Bigne, Ruiz, and Sanz (2005). They explored whether the age of a consumer had an impact on their online shopping of mobile devices in Spain. The demographic factors that were utilized in this study were age, gender, and social class. The results showed that younger consumers have the tendency toward online shopping more than the older consumers. Furthermore, they found younger consumers are more disposed to purchasing products online and are more willing to accept new technology. This study concluded that the age of consumers have their own characteristics, need, and demand, which affects their purchase intention and decision making process of purchasing a product (Arnould et al., 2004; Hawkins et al., 2007; Kotler & Keller, 2006).

Race of consumers is another demographic factor that influences consumer behavior. Race can be defined as a group of people who have a common national, communication, or cultural origin within the larger society (Arnould et al., 2004). Some researchers have referred to the race of consumers as a people’s culture or subculture, which can become an influential factor as racial segmentation in a strategic marketing plan (Arnould et al., 2004). In addition, Schiffman and Kanuk (2007, p. 56) have shown that there is a “common cultural tendency to share the same values, beliefs, and customers.” Thus, this study adopted race as an independent variable to explore any differences among the races of consumers regarding their purchase intention in Malaysia.

Research conducted by Ahmad, Juhdij, and Jasin (2009) explored the purchase intention of female consumers to compare the purchases of imported cosmetic products with local cosmetic products. The major respondents for thus research consisted of 46% Malay and 39.4% Indian. The results concluded that ethnocentrism had a positive influence on the purchase of local cosmetic products in Malaysia versus

that of imported cosmetic products. The influence level of ethnocentrism was in terms of the consumer's race and income.

Research of automobile purchasing in different countries has been conducted by a number of researchers. For example, Prasitphol (2002), Serhateri (2002), and Portolese Diaz (2004) have researched automobile purchasing in different countries. Prasitphol explored the influence of demographic factors on the purchase behavior of consumers in Japan, Thailand, and the United States. Prasitphol found that culture influenced consumers in terms of their purchase behavior. He observed that culture has unique idiosyncrasies that influence the attitudes and beliefs of consumers which affect their purchase intention and purchase behavior. In his research, Prasitphol adopted five demographic factors: age, gender, income, occupation, and education. Prasiphol found that gender was one factor that influenced the consumer's purchase behavior of an automobile in Japan, Thailand, and the United States. In Thailand, income was the only factor that influenced the purchase intention of consumers to purchase an automobile. However, income did not have such a major influence on the consumer's purchase intention for an automobile in the United State and Japan because relative to their income the price of an automobile is not perceived as out of reach. Therefore, in Thailand as income increases the consumer can more easily afford an automobile and is more inclined to purchase an automobile due to more disposable income.

Serhateri (2002) researched the distribution channel effect of automobile purchases by consumers in Turkey and the United States. The channel of distribution was divided into on-line and traditional channel purchasing. Serhateri studied the effect of a consumer's gender on purchasing an automobile utilizing on-line and traditional distribution channels in American and Turkish markets. The study concluded that gender, income, and age of consumers influenced their purchase intention of an automobile in terms of the distribution channel.

Portolese Dias (2004) researched the cohort groups of consumers on their purchase behavior. Portolese Dias adopted age of consumers to divide five cohort groups in terms of their generation. For instance, X generation who are between the ages of 28 and 38. Portolese Dias found that although cohort groups affect the purchase intention and behavior of consumers, the point is the desire of consumers for certain products what they want. In the research of Portolese Dias adopted four categories: (a) household goods, (b) electronics, (c) clothing, and (d) automobile. The result indicated that although income was an influential factor affected the consumer to purchase an automobile and clothing, Income did not affect the consumer to purchase household goods and electronics products. Furthermore, age did not influence the intention of consumer to purchase an automobile and clothing. Age affected consumers to purchase household goods and electronics products.

Finally, because of these as above, the study adopts demographic variables of consumers as independence variables: (a) gender, (b) gender, and (c) race. Purchase intention of consumers is the dependence variable. Income of consumers was a moderating variable effect on the relationship between demographic variables of consumers and their purchase intention. To select income became a moderating variable, because income of consumers may be one of variables has more influence than other variables. Furthermore, income can illustrate the ability of consumption level in terms of consumers' income and explore consumers' consideration for durable products purchasing - how does income influence consumers' intention to purchase an automobile in a multiracial society.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The research questions and hypotheses are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

Does the demographics (gender, age, and race) of consumers influence their intention to purchase an automobile, after moderating by their income?

H₁: Income of consumers does influence their purchase intention.

H₂: Gender of consumers does influence their purchase intention after moderating by their income.

H₃: Age of consumers does influence their purchase intention after moderating by their income.

H₄: Race of consumers does influence their purchase intention after moderating by their income.

METHODS

In order to minimize the research time and cost, the study adopted the snowball sampling by online survey. Snowball sampling is a convenient sampling method and belongs to the non-probability sampling technique (Babbie, 2010; Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Malhotra, 2004). The initial group of participants was selected at random from the target population. After being interviewed, these participants were asked to forward the questionnaire to their known friends and acquaintances (Babbie, 2010; Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Malhotra, 2004). Thus, information technology of e-mail improves the snowball sampling distribution from the initial group of participants. Furthermore, the initial e-mail address list was provided by a marketing professional organization in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The population of the study consists of a population who are 21 years old and above working adults either living or working in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and who could answer the questionnaire online. The questionnaire design collected information pertaining to the respondents' demographics consisting of: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) income, and (d) race. Race has been divided into (a) Chinese, (b) Indian, (c) Malay, and (d) other. Seven different time horizons of the purchase intention of consumers were categorized as follows: (a) within 3 months, (b) 4 to 6 months, (c) 7 to 9 months, (d) 10 to 12 months, (e) 13 to 18 months, and (f) 19 to 24 months and above 2 years.

Due to the moderating variable of income, the study adopted a hierarchical regression analysis to exam hypotheses one to four. Hierarchical regression analysis model is a multiple regression analysis model and consists of (a) independent variable(s), (b) moderating variable, and (c) dependent variable. The added variable moderates the effect of the relationship between the independent variable(s) and the dependent variable (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006; Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). To adopt this approach, the first entry in the analysis is the moderating variable, while the following entries are the independent variables. This approach is supported by researchers who explained that "subsequent variables are then added in order to determine the specific amount of variance they can account for, above, and beyond, what has been explained by any variables entered prior" (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005, p. 170). Thus, Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006, p. 18) have shown that multiple regression analysis model "predict changes in the dependent variable in response to changes in the independent variables."

RESULTS

The sample population consisted of 413 respondents in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and the survey period took place over a 14-week period. The frequency distribution of the gender is 50.6% of Male and 49.4% of female. The top four ranges of the respondents' age were: (a) 26 to 30 years of age (20.8%); (b) 31 to 35 years of age (18.2%); (c) 21 to 25 years of age (17.7%); and (d) 36 to 40 years of age (16.2%). The top four ranges of the respondents' income were: (a) RM2,000 to 3,999 (33.7%); (b) RM4,000 to RM5,999 (23.5%); (c) below RM1,999 (19.6%); and (d) RM6,000 to RM7,999 (10.4%). The distribution of the race of respondents consisted of (a) 53% Chinese, (b) 33.2% Malay, and (c) 9% Indian.

As it is observed, Table 1 indicates the value of R^2 increased from 0.016 to 0.073. Income, Indian, and Malay determine 5.7% of variations of purchase intention in Kuala Lumpur. Thus, the dependent variable of the purchase intention of consumers in Kuala Lumpur on income and race can be expressed by the following regression model.

$$\text{Purchase intention} = 3.333 - 0.130 \times \text{income} + 0.802 \times \text{indian} + 1.074 \times \text{malay} + \varepsilon$$

The above regression model indicates that on average the purchase intention of Indian consumers in Kuala Lumpur exceeds the purchase intention of Chinese consumers or races other than the ones named in the study by 0.802, when any other influential variable is identical in the two groups. Furthermore, on average the purchase intention of Malay consumers in Kuala Lumpur exceeds the purchase intention of Chinese consumers or races other than the ones named in the study by 1.074, when any other influential variable is identical in the two groups. If one wants to rank races by their purchase intention, Malay consumers are first, Indian consumers are second, other races are third, and Chinese consumers are fourth. As a result, hypotheses one and hypotheses four are accepted.

TABLE 1
R SQUARED OF THE REGRESSION MODEL USED TO TEST HYPOTHESES ONE THROUGH FOUR

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.127	0.016	0.014	2.115	0.016	6.693	1	411	0.010
2	0.272	0.073	0.059	2.065	0.057	4.996	5	406	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Income(RM)

b. Predictors: (Constant), Income(RM), Other, Gender, Indian, Malay, Age

TABLE 2
SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL OF THE COEFFICIENTS OF THE REGRESSION MODEL USED TO TEST HYPOTHESES ONE THROUGH FOUR

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.887	0.195		19.915	0.000		
	Income	-0.151	0.058	-0.127	-2.587	0.010	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	3.333	0.429		7.764	0.000		
	Income	-0.130	0.060	-0.109	-2.172	0.030	0.899	1.113
	Gender	0.080	0.206	0.019	0.387	0.699	0.976	1.025
	Age	-0.023	0.057	-0.021	-0.407	0.684	0.864	1.158
	Indian	0.802	0.368	0.108	2.176	0.030	0.933	1.072
	Malay	1.074	0.228	0.238	4.709	0.000	0.895	1.117
	Other	0.570	0.486	0.057	1.172	0.242	0.949	1.054

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

Table 3 illustrates the correlation among the independent variables: income and age of consumers. The results show the correlation between age and income of consumers. When consumers are older they have higher income. In contrast with older consumers, young consumers have less income. Table 2 and 3 show there is no strong correlation between age and income. Thus, multicollinearity is not problem for independent variables in the regression model analysis.

TABLE 3
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS OF AGE AND INCOME OF RESPONDENTS
IN KUALA LUMPUR

		Age	Income
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	0.304**
Income	Pearson Correlation	0.304**	1

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

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study's findings found that potential consumers who have a high intention to purchase an automobile in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia have two characteristics. First, the findings showed that different races of consumers have different intentions to purchase an automobile in terms of their age and income at appendices Table A.1 and A.2. The research sample consisted of Malay, Chinese, Indian, and other races. Specifically, the results found that Indian and Malay consumers have a higher purchase intention to purchase an automobile than Chinese consumers and other races. This is due to the Malay and Indian group being younger than the Chinese consumers. To rank the purchase intention of the consumer, the Study found that the Malay and Indian consumers have a higher intention to purchase an automobile than the Chinese and other races.

Second, the income of consumers affects their purchase intention. Table A.1 shows that consumers with lower income who have a higher intention to purchase an automobile than those with higher income consumers. The reason appears to be that consumers with higher income already have an automobile which means they do not have an unfulfilled need to purchase an automobile. However, consumers with lower income have a desire to purchase an automobile but cannot purchase until they have a higher income that allows them to purchase an automobile. The study also found that younger consumers are the ones who have lower incomes and do not own an automobile. Therefore, they are the group with a higher intention to purchase an automobile as soon as their income increases. Since the older consumers have a higher income and most likely have an automobile, they do not have a high intention to purchase an automobile when compared to the lower income consumers who have an unfulfilled need to purchase an automobile. Therefore, income is major influence factor on the purchase intention of a consumer when purchasing an automobile, particularly when the consumer has a lower income and begins to earn more income permitting the consumer to fulfill their need to purchase an automobile.

In conclusion, the result shows that young Indian or Malay with lower income are potential consumers because they may graduate from universities, start working, and begin to earn more income. Furthermore, as they earn more income they may begin looking to buy an automobile due to their additional income and need for an automobile. In other words, young Indian or Malay consumers with less income have a high intention to purchase a new automobile because they need transportation between living place to working location, and vice versa. These consumers will begin to look for an automobile as they gain employment and earn more income.

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APPENDICES

TABLE A.1
CROSS TABULATION OF PURCHASE INTENTION AND INCOME OF
RESPONDENTS IN KUALA LUMPUR

Income(RM)	Purchase Intention							Total
	2 ys +	19-24 mths	13-18 mths	10-12 mths	7-9 mths	4-6 mths	Within 3 mths	
Below 1,999	36	5	4	9	3	13	11	81
2,000-3,999	32	10	15	32	14	25	11	139
4,000-5,999	28	7	6	17	15	18	6	97
6,000-7,999	15	0	5	9	4	10	0	43
8,000-9,999	7	1	3	4	1	3	2	21
10,000-11,999	6	0	0	1	0	2	1	10
12,000-13,999	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	6
14,000-15,999	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
16,000+	9	1	1	1	0	2	0	14
Total	139	24	34	75	37	73	31	413

TABLE A.2
CROSS TABULATION OF AGE AND PURCHASE INTENTION OF
RESPONDENTS IN KUALA LUMPUR

Purchase Intention	Age									Total
	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	61-65	
Above 2 years	24	22	26	26	13	10	11	6	1	139
19 to 24 mths	4	5	2	2	3	3	3	1	1	24
13 to 18 mths	3	12	6	4	6	1	1	1	0	34
10 to 12 mths	18	13	12	18	9	1	4	0	0	75
7 to 9 mths	5	13	10	1	4	1	1	2	0	37
4 to 6 mths	11	15	14	14	10	7	1	0	1	73
Within 3 mths	8	6	5	2	5	1	4	0	0	31
Total	73	86	75	67	50	24	25	10	3	413