

Attributable E-commerce toward Purchase Intention: Online Search of Food Product

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Abstract—The impact of Internet technologies is undeniable. With the development of the Internet nowadays have empowered online communication, many individual intend to start their shopping need with an information search on the online media before buying at actual store. This study empirically examines the website attributes in e-commerce (information quality, website features and product factors) influencing customer purchase intention of food product. Through self-administered questionnaire, a total 257 were able to be collected. Result revealed that there are positive relationships between information quality, websites features and product factors toward purchase intention on food product. Also, it is worth mentioning that website features of website attributes in e-commerce was the most influential attribute in explaining the purchase intention on food product. Hence, the finding of this study can confer a lot of advantages and will be judge through the contribution it makes to extend the body of literature for the future research and will be relevance to future website planning, development, designing and monitoring for food retailers in Malaysia.

Keywords—E-commerce; Food Product; Information Quality; Online Information Search; Product Factors; Purchase Intention; Website Attributes; Website Features.

Abbreviations—Information Quality (IQ); Product Factors (PF); Purchase Intention (PI); Website Features (WB).

I. INTRODUCTION

IN this day and age, retailer is facing increasingly extreme challenges, which include continuous enlargement, designs and new operating skills to meet customers' demands. With rapids the technological modernization, most innovative retailers such as large store, hypermarket, wholesale sales warehouse, warehouse clubs, shopping center, shopping center, and at the outlet center are developing and introduced on the market [Ming et al., 2008]. Retail has always offered a variety of stores option to consumers and in advance world today, the retail trade on the internet is one of the most successful forms of commerce [Limayem et al., 2000; Levy & Weitz, 2001; Shim et al., 2001; Wilson-Jeanslme & Reynolds, 2006].

The continuation of the development of communication technologies, the Internet, has increased both the retailers' potential to reach consumers all over the world and access of consumers to these retailers [Ilgan, 2009]. One of the most important communication channels in the world which is Internet are expanding and the use of the internet is

motivating some changes in the consumer purchase process [Casalo et. al, 2007]. In other words, it provides customers with traditional benefits of retail such as the free access of information to help them make informed purchasing decisions. Consumers are progressively turning more to available websites in order to get the information on which to base their decisions [Kozinets, 2002]. Online formats that they are using for instance are blogs, podcasts, social networks, bulletin boards and wikis to share ideas on a specified product, service, or brand and contact other consumers, who are considered more objective sources of information [Kozinets, 2002].

The above notion indicates the Internet has importantly impacted the information search behavior. The hasty development and the depth of the information available on the Internet allow consumers to access this information on an individual basic with a minimum of effort and cost. Finally, it is of this fact likely for Internet consumers to use information to take a decision to purchase food product. Although consumers have the possibility to purchase online, most of shoppers turn to the Internet to 'pre-shop' for information

about products before they go into the store to make a purchase [Yahoo! & comScore, 2007]. Despite the steady growth in online commerce, however, there are few perceptions regarding how different sources of information affect consumers' purchase decisions. In short, the purchase intention towards the customer due to purchase the food product by using the internet became issues in this study. The main areas are issues of security, delivery problem and insurance of the quality of food products all impede the implementation of e-commerce marketing plans [Williamson, 1975; Covino & Porro, 2000; Jill E. Hobbs et al., 2003]. Nevertheless, the biggest predicament with the electronic commerce as a marketing channel, especially for food products, is the incapability of consumers to tangibly touch, smell and inspected the products [Jill E. Hobbs et al., 2003]. Since those consumers cannot use visual inspection to identify and analyze the characteristics of quality to make a purchase decision, food retailer need find other resources of gestures the quality of the product to consumers and guaranteeing them of its integrity and its reliability.

Based on above mentioned statement, this study has attempted to fill the gap by exploring to what extent the food information searchers select the Internet as their most important channel for information to purchase food at store from Malaysian retail context. More specifically, researchers will focus on the website attributes in e-commerce influence customer purchase intention on food product in order to acquire the information on the nature for food retailers understand the full impact on their online presence which may have on consumer in-store behavior and can help to create better understanding on information perspective needed by educators, researchers and students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Online Information Search

The understanding of the knowledge of the way in which consumers referred the information has always been regarded as essential for understanding consumer buying behavior, and it has important implications for planning marketing communications [Newman & Staelin Richard, 1972]. Information search is defined as the stage of the decision-making process where consumers actively collect and incorporate information from many sources, both internal and external [Blackwell et al., 2001; Guo, 2001], before making a choice [Schmidt & Spreng, 1996]. In addition, the Internet has often been acclaimed as a powerful tool with enormous possibilities to change the consumption research information on behaviors [Hoffman & Novak, 1996]. It offers a lot of information which varies considerably in terms of quantity, as well as the quality.

2.2. Website Attributes in E-commerce

A website can be seen as a platform that provides customers access to information in order to help them and influence their perception of a firm's effectiveness [Ranganathan et al.,

2002]. E-commerce can be defined as the sale and purchase of products and services over the Internet [Keeney, 1999]. Although there are many attributes on website in e-commerce such as system quality, security, privacy, trust, and many more, but for purpose in this study researchers only concentrating only the three features which are information quality, website features and product factors. This is due that those attributes were the most important elements to evaluate the effectiveness of an information and perception the customers based on its degree of use in decision making that affect purchase intention of food product.

2.2.1. Information Quality

Information quality is a critical building block of e-commerce [Xu & Koronios, 2004]. The contextual view emphasizes information quality in relation to the context such as user, task, and application where the information is used [Lee et al., 2002]. The representational view defines information quality as the degree to which the format facilitates interpretation and understanding of the information [Wang & Strong, 1996]. The most commonly used items for information quality are accuracy, currency, completeness, timeless, and understandability [Delone Peak & Mclean, 1992; Lederer et al., 2000; Lin & Lu, 2000]. Information quality is likely to help users to compare shopping products, increase shopping enjoyment and take better purchase choices.

2.2.2. Website Features

Website design is a fundamental to create a website. It determines the important website features that are critical to establish the quality of service delivered through the website [Xue et al., 2000]. Flavian et al., (2006) propose different design features that lead to a successful website including aesthetic appearance, navigation, organized and managed content display. Liao et al., (2006) noted that the element in the website is appearance which refers to the visual attractiveness of a website. According to Ranganathan et al., (2002), it includes the colors, fonts, images and multimedia functions, as well as a general provision which can increase the aesthetic and visual attractiveness of the site in its turn influences the perception of its value in the website. Appearance of the site is also an obvious cue by consumers who believe that the trust [Liao et al., 2006] will lead to the purchase. Other than that, website frequently uses some attractions such as animation, video, music, and other multimedia files to attract the attention.

2.2.3. Product Factors

Schaupp & Belanger (2005) deliberated products to be perceived quality of the product or service for sale. They argued that the merchandising, the quality of the products and customization are the main determinants of the customer purchase decision. Studies in the past have also insisted on the functions of the product which have an impact on the online purchasing behavior, for example, are of various goods, product quality/performance/product the uncertainty,

the availability of products, prices, social presence requirement, product presence requirement, the reliability of the product, the opportunity to customize their products and for the brand [Liang & Huang, 1998; Muthitacharoen, 1999; Jahng et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2001; Cho et al., 2001; Lowengart & Tractinsky, 2001].

Crespo Angel Herrero & Bosque Igancio (2010) also emphasized the factors of product perceptions includes price, variety and product quality. This is degree to which consumers perceived the website as the information to make a decision for purchase a food product. Detlor et al., (2003) acknowledged product related coding categories which are description of the product includes brand or product names, price such as amount, range, complete, discount, rebate, good and poor of the product (reasonable or expensive), quality of the product whether good or poor and specs which is product specifications (features and performance).

2.3. Purchase Intention

Buying intentions play an important role in helping the companies predict customer buying behavior [Dodds et al., 1991]. According to Hausman & Siekpe (2009), purchase intention, along with the intention to return, is one of the more commonly referred as online behavioral intentions. Customers with a positive purchase intention, for example, customers have developed positive or favorable feelings toward the product are more likely to make a purchase [Pavlou, 2003]. The customers formulate positive purchase intention over a period of time as before to buy a product, they search for information and the acquisition of the desired information, and customers feel more confident about their choice. Leelayuthyotin (2004) indicates the availability of useful and relevant information positively influences the customers of purchasing intentions and finally leads to the actual purchase.

Studies in the past, has also pointed out to several other factors that affect the customer purchase intention. For example, Shim et al., (2001) find that customers' purchase intention to use the Internet to search information is the strongest predictor of purchase intention and it is also the role of mediates the relationship between intention to purchase and other predictors such as attitudes toward Internet shopping, perceived behavioral control and previous Internet purchase experience. Lohse et al., (2000) and Ranganathan et al., (2002) claims that the information offered on the website have a positive impact on purchase intention.

III. METHODS

This research is classified as descriptive study and conducted according to quantitative approach or empirical exploration has been carried out to describe the relationship on website attributes in the area of e-commerce and purchase intention. The population of the sample has been selected to be the consumers who had at least one prior experience using the internet respectively. With this, the simple random sampling is carried out for the data-collection process while each

element of the target population has an equal probability of being selected. In line with the argument and conforms to the standard given by Robert C. Krejcie & Daryle W. Morgan (1970), 257 were chosen as a sample and 400 questionnaires were distributed to four hypermarket at SeberangPerai and via Facebook using Microsoft Web App. Therefore, the administration of questionnaires to large number of people at the same time is less costly and less time consuming [Gravetter & Forzano, 2003].

As regards the content of the instrument adopted, three sections have been created consist of a part A, part B and Part C. The first part which is (part A) is to focus on the respondent demographic profile with five variables includes gender, race/ethnicity, age, highest level of education and monthly income. Part B of 30-points measures websites attributes of e-commerce to the customer purchase intention consist of the information quality (information content), website features (image, layout, appearance) and product factors (price, quality, description) using five point Likert scale on the level of agreement of (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree" while the part C "measure customer purchase intention of food product with 5-points also using five points Likert scale on the level of agreement of (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". All the items were adopted from previous similar studies and modified to suit the study objectives by Ahn et al., (2004), Liao et al., (2006) and Crespo Angel Herrero & Bosque Igancio (2010).

Pre-Test was conducted with 30 respondents among Faculty Hotel and Tourism Management Pulau Pinang of Bachelor students and also staffs in order to ensure the clarity and effectiveness of the instrument. The investigation has been skillfully distributed and conducted in 4 weeks. A brief description of the object of study was mentioned and the participation was voluntary and all information provided is confidential. A total of 257 questionnaires were collected and the data were coded and keyed. By using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability, two sections of the questionnaire (part B) and (C) are accessed separately. Result revealed that the elements and instruments used was reliable and acceptable for part B (quality of information) with coefficient Alpha value to 0.899, 0.913 for websites features and product factors 0.865 and finally for part C (purchase intention) to 0.818.

IV. RESULTS

4.1. Respondent's Profile

From the descriptive statistics, 36.6 percent (n=94) were male compared to 63.4 (n=163) of female. With regards to race, majority of them were Malay with a total of 139 respondents (54.1 percent). The rest of the samples were Chinese 77 persons (30.0 percent), Indian 25 (9.7 percent) and other races 16 represent 6.2 percent. It was found that for age group, 9.3 percent (n=24) respondents at the age range less than 20 years, 77.0 percent (n=198) represent 21-30 years are denotes from a larger percentage among all, 12.1 percent (n=31) in the range of 31-40 years and 1.6 percent (n=4)

represent 41-50 years. Based on education, 18.7 (n=48) were from SPM as opposed to 21.0 percent (n=54) were from diploma level, 52.9 percent (n=136) claimed as bachelor degree which is high and 7.4 percent (n=19) from masters level. In terms of income level of the respondents, it show that 39.3 percent (n=101) were earned between RM1000-RM2000 compare to those earned between RM2001-RM3000 (44.0 percent, n=113), RM3001-RM4000 (12.1 percent, n=31) and range between RM4001 above (4.7 percent, n=12).

Besides demographic profile, there are question was probed to instigate respondents internet usage on the technology experience. Majority of respondents agreed they used internet in their daily life. The higher proportion of the respondents experience using the Internet over 4 years (68.1 percent, n=175). With regard to time spend on the internet, 28.8 percent (n=74) were 1-2 hours per day frequently time to spend. Therefore, the mode for the most frequent source of access to the internet among respondents was their own home (49.0, n=126). Besides, regarding the important of information at a website makes them to purchase at store/shopping mall analysis, it found that mainly respondents feel fairly important with 49.4 percent (n=127). 68.9 percent (n=177) of respondents declared used to purchased anything at physical store after search online information. Finally, less than once a month signify 52.5 percent (n=135) often make a decision to purchase a product.

4.2. Mean Score and Standard Deviation

The descriptive statistic was then used in investigating the independent variable of purchase intention. Magnitudes of mean score for all items in the three dimensions to purchase intention were shown in the Table 1. For Information Quality (IQ), the mean score were ranging from 3.66 to 3.88 and these indicated most of respondents were in fairly agreement with overall information quality from the website. On the website features, respondents believed that it has impacts on them to purchase food. This fit with a mean score ranging from 3.68 to 4.06 to this item. Meanwhile, respondents further agreed that they possible to find any kind of food products that available in the mall and easier to find products with a good quality with mean score 4.00 for products factors. The other items were classified as moderate score and most respondents agreed that pricing info, value range display of product, product quality, description and brand determine product factors in the website attributes. The highest mean score (M=4.01, item 5) given by respondents to the item purchase intention in this analysis perhaps explain the feelings that respondents agreed. Together this point indicates that despite agreeing website attributes in e-commerce using online information search however, it was slightly influence to purchase intention of food products in the mall.

4.3. Reliability Analyses

To ensure that the items for each of the variables were internally related, the reliabilities of all four dimensions were

re-tested using Cronbach's Alpha. However, there is one items from information quality were removed due not applicable pertaining this study. The result indicates that Cronbach's Alpha value range from 0.816 to 0.889 and the measure is highly reliable for measuring the construct. All exceeded the minimum standard for reliability showing that the measure of each of the factors was also highly reliable.

4.4. Measuring the Relationship of Website Attributes towards Customer Purchase Intention

Correlation analysis was conducted to test the relationship between websites attributes with their purchase intention in Table 2. The result pointed out that there is a significant correlation between information quality and purchase intention (sig. value =0.000< 0.05). This is further support by the strong positive coefficient of correlation value ($r = 0.615$). Meanwhile, websites features ($r = .630$) was found as a strong or large perfect positive correlation between average correlation of product factors ($r = .569$) towards customer purchase intention. In other word of saying, the more customer online search with effectiveness information, the more they will influence to purchase food.

To more answer the objectives of the study, a standard multiple regressions was conducted to examine the most influential attributes influencing customer purchase intention on food product. Table 3 shows the regression analysis and it was found that the websites attributes in e-commerce were significantly influenced the purchase intention of food product. In this study, the value which is R Square for IQ, WB and PF towards purchase intention (PI) .491 or 49.1% (0.491×100). It means that these variables (IQ, WB and PF) have 49.1% of the variance in purchase intention. This appears as acceptable result. Regarding the table of result coefficients, the most influential attribute is website features (WB) with Beta value (β) of 0.357 which is significant at the 0.000 level. The results of multiple regression analysis revealed it is clear that website features is the most influential attribute in explaining the purchase intention on food product. This is because the variable makes the strongest unique involvement to explain the dependent variable (PI), when the variance explained by other variables in the model is controlled for.

V. CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study is to explore the relationship of website attributes in e-commerce which is information quality, website features and product factors when online search will influence customer purchase intention. Respondents are agreed that information in website is reliable and accurate, believability, interpretability of information, accessibility the information, value-added of information and the relevancy of information also contribute to the attributes that might influence respondents desire to purchase food product. By many people who are concern about the nutritional values that contained in the food product, the nutritional descriptions that shown in some restaurants

website such as Subway’s website are crucial for them. So, the total information needed such as provided by Subway’s website surely enough to capture the viewer’s thought to purchase the food products that the restaurant provided.

In addition, website features has strongest positively correlated with the customer purchase intention due to the website contains lots of useful information with the magnificent visualization and providing the viewers an exclusive things to see such as pictures, how the information was elaborate, and the how the website is managed time by time in order to attract the viewers with much interesting values in it. Customers also agreed that website features have given the impact and good perceptions towards their intention to search the information. Same goes to products factors which were significantly correlated with an average agreement of customers to availability of products, good price-quality, product pricing info, value range display of product, product quality, product description and brand also the contribution of product factors to obtain customers access the Internet and gain proficiency at searching for product information.

With regards to the most influential attributes, food retailers should keep in mind that majority of the customers

care about the presentation of visual aids, the image and the interactive features on the website can make them have the feeling of curiosity, attraction and even being persuaded to purchase food product in the market. This is due to visual impressions of food such as fresh, clean and delicious food well displayed and prepared attract customers will play a critical motivational role leading to their food choice in the market [Kim et al., 2009].

In conclusion, it is important for the food retailers to be able to predict the extent to which by using the Internet as information search is perceived to be acceptable for its customer. Food retailers have to think outside expectation of e-commerce when designing and creating their websites and also the advertising pages. It will help the web retailer the needs and wants of their consumers in the strategies to improve their website in terms of design and online advertising of food. On the other hand, the originality finding of this study will be judge to the contribution it makes to extend the body of literature on the online information specifically the purchase intention of food product. Further study should be undertaken in extend the conceptual model by including and evaluating these other website attributes that will give a significant result.

VI. APPENDIX

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis for Website Attributes Influencing Purchase Intention

Variables	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Information Quality (IQ)		
I prefer the use of Internet for information rather than other sources to purchase food product.	3.88	.708
I believe the Internet provides reliable and accurate information of food product.	3.74	.556
I believe the information of food product is regarded as true and credible.	3.70	.594
I think e-commerce Websites information of food product was clear, available and understandable.	3.77	.625
I think using the information Web would help me to purchase food product I really want.	3.79	.669
I think the content of website information of food product makes me feel interested to purchase.	3.81	.676
I am confident that I can gain relevant information of food product through online sources on the web vendors if I am planning to purchase a product.	3.75	.644
I think the information of food is applicable and look persuasive to me.	3.68	.612
I think the information of food is easily comprehended.	3.66	.599
Overall, information quality has a big influence on me to purchase the product at mall.	3.77	.690
Website Features (WB)		
I found the website of food product is attractive and interesting.	4.05	.607
I found the website of product has a clean and simple presentation.	3.91	.587
I found the website has close-up or 3D images of the products.	3.74	.624
I found the website of food product has proper use of fonts and color.	4.03	.592
I found the website has presence of visual presentation aids (graphics, audio, and video).	4.06	.632
I found the website has product specifications (features and performance).	3.86	.605
I think the presentation and appearance of food website made me feel curious to purchase.	3.73	.664
I think the website enable me to identify the fresh and healthy food offered by a gastronomic location.	3.73	.692
I prefer the sites that have chat room and comments to see what others say about the food product and service.	3.88	.637
Interactive features on an e-commerce Website of food product help me determine whether or not I will purchase offline at mall.	3.68	.617
Overall, website features has a big influence on me to purchase the product at mall.	3.89	.585
Product Factors (PF)		
The website makes me possible to see all or complete product pricing info of food product.	3.76	.657
The website makes me easier to find a value range displayed for a product.	3.83	.579

The website makes me possible to find any kind of food products that available in the mall.	4.00	.548
The website makes me easier to find products with a good price-quality.	4.00	.603
The website makes me possible to find information about product quality.	3.89	.596
The website makes me possible to see a written description of the product.	3.75	.547
The website makes me possible to choose brand and product names.	3.88	.600
Overall, product factors have a big influence on me to purchase the product at mall.	3.84	.558
Purchase Intention (PI)		
I intend to use the Internet to find out information for purchase food products.	3.93	.698
I expect retailers continue to provide reliable information of food products in the future.	3.99	.682
I intend to get the information regarding the products frequently using a website.	3.98	.655
It is possibly that I will use the e-commerce website to search information about food products.	3.86	.628
Overall, I would purchase products at store/hypermarket after search information at website.	4.01	.670

Table 2: Correlation of All Variables

	Measure	1	2	3	4
1	Information Quality	-	-	-	.615**
2	Website Features		-	-	.630**
3	Product Factors			-	.569**
4	Purchase Intention				-

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N= 257

Table 3: Regression Analysis between Information Quality, Website Features, Product Factors towards Purchase Intention

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.701 ^a	.491	.485	.38109

a. Predictors: (Constant), PF, IQ, WB

b. Dependent Variable: PI

Model	Model	Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		Beta		
1	Information Quality (IQ)	.333		.000
	Website features (WB)	.357		.000
	Product factors (PF)	.108		.110

a. Dependent Variable: PI (Purchase Intention), R squared = 49.1%

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