

A Developed Model for Purchase Intention of Foreign Food Products: An Empirical Study in the Iranian Context

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to develop a conceptual model for purchase intention of foreign food products in the Iranian context. Based on an in-depth review of past literature, the sub-factors related to customer's purchase intention were extracted. Then, exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were applied to identify and confirm the factors affecting purchase intention of foreign food products. The obtained results illustrate the thirteen factors as follows: "corporate social responsibility", "customer knowledge and awareness", "perceived risk", "retailer's commercial image", "customer's personality characteristics", "social identity", "product features", "attitude", "country-of origin",

“perceived value”, “subjective norm”, “loyalty”, and “perceived behavioral control”. The proposed model could contribute to international food companies and retailers to understand customers’ expectations and to gain more market share in Iran. Designing a conceptual model for purchase intention of foreign food products in Iran based on a comprehensive set of the effective factors, developing the theoretical literature in the field of the factors affecting customer’s purchase intention, and presenting valuable results for academicians, marketing managers, and retailers.

Keywords: Purchase Intention; Foreign Food Products; Iranian Context; Exploratory Factor Analysis; Confirmatory Factor Analysis

1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, companies are always struggling to survive and grow and the need for fast growth in a competitive business environment is that companies must go beyond national boundaries and seek international markets (Jaafar et al., 2012). Such a phenomenon requires globalization and in this regard, companies should discover business success factors at an international level and increase them (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012). One of the most important international business success factors is selling products that in order to enhance this factor, Customer’s Purchase Intention (CPI) should be considered (Bashir et al., 2018). To this end, research on CPI is considered as an important issue in the success of an international business, as studies conducted around the world on examining the factors affecting purchase intention of foreign products are a solid reason to this issue (Son et al., 2013; Liang, 2015; Haque et al., 2015; Asif et al., 2018). A review of previous studies suggests that focusing on predetermined factors related to CPI (e.g. cultural factors) is a simplistic perspective and cannot help international companies achieve desired outcomes (Moon et al., 2008; Nguyen et al., 2008; Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012; Kim et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2018). In other words, the factors affecting CPI depend greatly on the desired country context (Kumar et al., 2009), because each region’s customers have their own unique characteristics (Nguyen et al., 2008;

Jaafar et al., 2012; Haque et al., 2015). Therefore, the factors affecting CPI in different countries are important to grow international companies (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012). Food security, income, and direct and indirect job creation generated by the food industry in Iran have led this industry to be considered as one of the most important industries to increase economic growth in the country (MIMT, 2017). Therefore, trying to recognize the market and the customers' behavior in Iran's food industry can lead to market development for national and international companies. Previous studies have shown that factors affecting purchase intention of foreign food products were identified in different countries, including the United States America (USA) (Yoo and Donthu, 2005), Taiwan (Lin and Chen, 2006), India (Kumar et al., 2009), Egypt (Mostafa, 2010), Malaysia (Jaafar et al., 2012), and USA and China (Bong Ko and Jin, 2017). In other words, although there is an available literature on the research subject in the various context, the lack of such a research is evident in the Iranian context considering the recent international developments. On the other hand, there is no a pioneer research in the research field that provides a comprehensive set of factors affecting CPI. In this regard, it can be argued that the main areas of factors affecting CPI in the past studies were not well specified. Thus, the main purpose of the present study is to provide a developed model for purchase intention of foreign food products in the Iranian context. In this regard, the following questions are raised:

- What are the factors affecting purchase intention of foreign food products?
- How is the effectiveness of each of the identified factors in the Iranian context?

2. Literature review

Researchers have considered several factors affecting purchase intention of foreign food products in different context. This study aims to identify a comprehensive set of factors affecting purchase intention of foreign food products. Customer Knowledge and Awareness (CKA) is the combination of information, experience, value, and insight, which is created during the transaction and exchange between customer and enterprise (Mostafa, 2006). Price awareness means customer's

understanding into product's price (Bashir et al., 2018). Green knowledge refers to the customer's awareness of the environment, the customer's worry into environmental issues, and efforts to address these problems (Mostafa, 2006). According to the above-mentioned issues, CKA can affect CPI. Social Identity (SI) is a kind of self-knowledge in relation to others (Bashir et al., 2018). The process of identity-building allows an individual to find a satisfactory answer to the fundamental question about human social nature (Haque et al., 2015). Job identity relates to the individual's occupation and it is important in a person's social life, because financial success, respect, power, and social influence depend heavily on it (Moon et al., 2008). Family identity relates to one of the most important reference groups, i.e. the family. Personality features and lifestyle of parents influence strongly the personal and SI of each person (Shah-Alam and Mohamed-Sayuti, 2011). With regard to the above-mentioned description, SI can affect CPI. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an attempt to understand and meet the stakeholders' expectations (such as customers, suppliers, distributors, and environmentalists), which encourages managers to exceed the minimum legal requirements of the organization (David et al., 2005). McWilliams et al. (2006) points out that CSR affect customers' decision and includes the various dimensions namely, economic, legal, ethical, and public. Economic dimension emphasizes the company's economic activity in society (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). In legal dimension, an organization must act based on the framework of public law and regulations (McWilliams et al., 2006). Considering the above issues, CSR can influence on CPI. A review of previous research shows that customers view retailers as representative of companies, considering broader characteristics of their corporate reputation (Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011; Calvo Porral and Lang, 2015). RCI is related to customer perceptions of product diversity (Jaafar et al., 2012), service quality (e.g. pay over time, free parking, and products return) (Teng et al., 2018), product quality (Calvo Porral and Lang, 2015), and advertising presented by retailer (Farzin and Fattahi, 2018), which affect CPI (Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011). Generally, the above discussion indicates that RCI can affect CPI. PR is the uncertainty in purchase environment and customer imagines that the purchase decision and its consequences are wrong and

inappropriate (Chen et al., 2018; Emami & Ranjbarian, 2018). Therefore, PR results from a lack of confidence in the purchase process (Jaafar et al., 2012). Financial risk shows the possibility of losing money and of buying valueless products (Emami & Ranjbarian, 2018). Performance risk refers to the possibility of the lack of expected benefits from the product (Jaafar et al., 2012). With regard to the above issues, PR can affect CPI. Personality characteristics include an organized set of relatively stable features that distinguish a person from other people and can be the basis towards classifying individuals (Mcdougall et al., 2008). These dimensions consist of openness to experience, extroversion, consistency and adaptation, and emotional attachment. In general, the above-mentioned discussion reveals that CPC can influence on CPI. Product Features (PF) are characteristics related to a product that describe its appearance, components, and capabilities (Moon et al., 2008). In the marketing literature, packaging is considered as an inseparable part of the product, which makes more flexible, safe, and easy usability (Watson et al., 2018). Product quality refers to the incorporate features that have a capacity to meet consumer's needs and creates customer satisfaction by improving products and making them free from any deficiencies or defects (Jaafar et al., 2012). According to the above-mentioned issues, PF can affect CPI. Attitude is a psychological structure that determines mental and emotional entity in a person (Jaafar et al., 2012). Intrinsic attitude refers to product features such as health and quality (Yeon and Chung, 2011), while extrinsic attitude toward a product emphasizes issues related to its brand such as brand popularity and brand awareness (Godey et al., 2012). With regard to the above-mentioned description, attitude can affect CPI. In the marketing literature, CoO reflects the consumer's views about the country that produced a product (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012). Cognitive impression is related to consumer's beliefs into CoO (Haque et al., 2015). Emotional impression involves consumer emotions toward CoO (Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009). Normative impression refers to should and should not (Dos and Don'ts) existent in consumer society into CoO (Godey et al., 2012). Considering the above issues, CoO can influence on CPI. Perceived Value (PV) refers to the relationship between the product value and the price paid (Kumar et al., 2009). Lai

and Chen (2011) define PV as a general assessment of consumer based on the perception of what is obtained and what is missing. Functional value refers to physical evidence and product quality (Jaafar et al., 2012). Generally, the above discussion indicates that PV can affect CPI. Subjective Norm (SN) is a reflection of social pressures that is perceived by a person and is formed a specific behavior (Garg and Joshi, 2018). SN is the belief of a person toward the thinking and opinion of reference people about a particular behavior. Reference people may include family or friends (Yeon and Chung, 2011). According to the above-mentioned issues, SN can affect CPI. Loyalty is a strong commitment towards buying again a superior product in the future so that the same product brand is purchased, with regard to the potential marketing efforts of its competitors. A review of the relevant literature indicates that loyalty affects CPI and contains two significant approaches: (1) behavioral and (2) attitudinal. Generally, the above-mentioned discussion indicates that loyalty can influence on CPI. PBC includes intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factor relates to the individual and includes incentive and emotions. Extrinsic factor has an environmental origin and consists of various sources such as money and time (Asif et al., 2018). Considering the above-mentioned issues, PBC can affect CPI.

3. Method

Based on the objective, this research is an applied-developmental research and in terms of the research method, is a descriptive-exploratory study. Based on the data analysis method, the present study has a quantitative approach and in terms of the data collection method is a survey research. The statistical population of the study includes customers who bought at least from one out of foreign food products stores in Tehran city between months April to September 2018. Based on the infinite population of the study, Morgan's table was used to determine sample size. According to Morgan's table, 384 people were selected as sample size. Due to the homogeneity of customers, simple random sampling was done. In this study, the library method was applied to perform the systematic literature review and the field method was used to collect the required data. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing two sections: general and specialized.

The general section comprises the demographic characteristics such as gender, income, and number of purchases. The specialized section contains the questions related to the sub-factors affecting CPI, which includes 44 sub-factors. In this study, the researchers visited the aforementioned stores and after full explanation to customers, asking them to respond to the questionnaire. Generally, 384 useful questionnaires were collected within two months. A systematic literature review was conducted to extract the sub factors affecting CPI. Then, the factors of the proposed model were identified and accredited using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). SPSS19 and Smart PLS 2 were applied to analyze the data.

4. Findings

In this study, EFA was employed to identify the factors affecting CPI. Table 1 represents the results of EFA.

Table 1. The results of EFA

EFA		Test results
KMO index ($0.6 \leq KMO \leq 1$)		0.798
Bartlett's test	χ^2	5356.136
	Degrees of freedom	946
	Sig ≤ 0.05	0.000
EC of each of the variables		More than 0.5
No. Of extracted factors (eigenvalues > 1)		13
Variable reduction and extraction method		Principal Component Analysis
Rotation method		Varimax with Kaiser normalization
Omitted variables in analysis		---
The explained variance after rotation (%)		62.734

Generally, 13 factors were identified based on the PCA approach. After Varimax rotation, these 13 factors clarify approximately 63% of the total variance of CPI (Table 1). Table 2 displays the identified factors and their factor loadings. These factors were named based on the sub-factors content pertaining to the desired factor.

Table 2. The identified factors and other results related to EFA

Factors	Sub-factors	Factor loadings	The explained variance	Reference
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	Economic dimension (e.g. appropriate price)	0.785	10.531	(David et al., 2005; McWilliams et al., 2006; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006)
	Environmental dimension (e.g. use of green packaging)	0.723		
	Legislation dimension (e.g. obtaining the necessary permissions)	0.692		
	Ethical dimension (e.g. attention to the beliefs and the norms of society)	0.647		
	Public/National dimension (e.g. friendly relations with the country)	0.599		
Customer Knowledge and Awareness (CKA)	Price Awareness	0.756	7.039	(Mostafa, 2006; Bong and Jin, 2017; Chen et al., 2018; Bashir et al., 2018)
	Green knowledge	0.688		
	Quality knowledge	0.644		
	Product knowledge / Product familiarity	0.617		
	Social Awareness	0.583		
Perceived Risk (PR)	Financial risk	0.735	6.748	(Jaafar et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2018; Emami and Ranjbarian, 2018)
	Performance risk	0.682		
	Time risk	0.621		
	Safety/Health risk	0.579		
Retailer's Commercial Image (RCI)	The wide range of food products in the store (product diversity)	0.723	5.234	(Jaafar et al., 2012; Calvo Porral and Lang, 2015; Farzin and Fattahi, 2018; Teng et al., 2018)
	The retailer's service quality (e.g. pay over time, free parking, and products return)	0.687		
	Offering products with high quality by the retailer	0.638		
	Advertising on social networks by the retailer	0.592		

Factors	Sub-factors	Factor loadings	The explained variance	Reference
Customer's Personality Characteristics (CPC)	Openness to experience	0.715	5.083	(Mcdougall et al., 2008; Vlachos and Vrechopoulos, 2012)
	Extroversion	0.680		
	Consistency and adaptation	0.631		
	Emotional attachment	0.572		
Social Identity (SI)	Religious identity (e.g. Islamic symbols and halal food)	0.709	4.008	(Nguyen et al., 2008; Moon et al., 2008; Shah-Alam and Mohamed-Sayuti, 2011; Haque et al., 2015; Garg and Joshi, 2018; Bashir et al., 2018)
	Job identity	0.689		
	Family identity	0.634		
	Ethnic identity	0.593		
Product Features (PF)	Product packaging (e.g. aesthetics)	0.750	3.964	(Moon et al., 2008; Jaafar et al., 2012; Watson et al., 2018; Bashir et al., 2018)
	Product quality	0.701		
	Product price	0.659		
Attitude	Intrinsic attitude toward the foreign brand product (including quality and health)	0.724	3.949	(Yeon and Chung, 2011; Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012; Jaafar et al., 2012; Godey et al., 2012; Haque et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2017; Garg and Joshi, 2018; Bashir et al., 2018)
	Extrinsic attitude toward the foreign brand product (including brand reputation and brand awareness)	0.663		
	Hedonic and utilitarianism attitude	0.602		
Country-of-Origin (CoO)	Cognitive image	0.709	3.708	(Roth and Diamantopoulos; 2009; Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012; Godey et al., 2012; Haque et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2017)
	Emotional image	0.681		
	Behavioral image	0.658		
Perceived Value (PV)	Functional value	0.694	3.425	(Kumar et al., 2009; Jaafar et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2018)
	Social value	0.653		
	Emotional value	0.611		

Factors	Sub-factors	Factor loadings	The explained variance	Reference
Subjective Norm (SN)	The mentality of family	0.760	3.126	(Yeon and Chung, 2011; Garg and Joshi, 2018)
	The mentality of friends and relatives	0.686		
Loyalty	Behavioral approach (i.e. repeating purchase behavior)	0.735	2.976	(Calvo Porral and Lang, 2015)
	Attitude approach (e.g. product priority and vendor/shop priority)	0.667		
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	Intrinsic/personal factors (including emotions and motivation)	0.692	2.941	(Asif et al., 2018)
	Extrinsic/environmental factors (including money and time)	0.638		

In the following, the measurement and structural sections are discussed in more detail. Validity and reliability are two important parts of the measurement model (Thompson, 2004). In the research, content and construct validities were applied to assess the validity of the identified factors. The reliability of the identified factors was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR). Table 3 shows the validity and reliability of the identified factors. The obtained results of the measurement section indicate that the validity and reliability of the identified factors are confirmed. In structural section, if the t-value of each latent construct exceeds 1.96, the latent construct would have a good fit. Table 3 shows the structural section results. The obtained results reveal that all the identified factors are verified.

Table 3. The CFA results

The measurement model											The structural model		
Correlation coefficients											Factor loading	R-squared	T-value
PR	RCI	CPC	SI	PF	Attitude	CoO	PV	SN	Loyalty	PBC			
0.329	0.277	0.443	0.095	0.182	0.312	0.171	0.242	0.129	0.203	0.106	0.848	0.647	7.578
0.289	0.276	0.294	0.090	0.186	0.262	0.198	0.206	0.134	0.075	0.072	0.872	0.689	8.385
---	0.363	0.198	0.208	0.192	0.143	0.173	0.126	0.141	0.023	0.104	0.794	0.604	6.824
---	---	0.410	0.327	0.424	0.342	0.259	0.168	0.099	0.062	0.136	0.821	0.622	7.161
---	---	---	0.219	0.333	0.420	0.182	0.187	0.126	0.084	0.118	0.787	0.597	6.754
---	---	---	---	0.495	0.373	0.369	0.109	0.092	0.178	0.114	0.866	0.655	7.744
---	---	---	---	---	0.478	0.402	0.092	0.096	0.082	0.037	0.773	0.575	6.638
---	---	---	---	---	---	0.368	0.131	0.063	0.060	0.014	0.752	0.559	5.957
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	0.193	0.201	0.149	0.266	0.725	0.531	5.540
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	0.192	0.322	0.087	0.708	0.512	5.516
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	0.267	0.178	0.699	0.502	4.975
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	0.213	0.686	0.491	4.738
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	0.678	0.477	4.412

Construct	AVE	CA	CR	CSR	CKA
				CSR	CKA
CSR	0.649	0.784	0.857	---	0.434
CKA	0.569	0.709	0.790	---	---
PR	0.584	0.697	0.766	---	---
RCI	0.601	0.697	0.783	---	---
CPC	0.645	0.757	0.824	---	---
SI	0.617	0.728	0.799	---	---
PF	0.668	0.72	0.802	---	---
Attitude	0.611	0.666	0.742	---	---
CoO	0.631	0.696	0.764	---	---
PV	0.565	0.619	0.688	---	---
SN	0.681	0.667	0.744	---	---
Loyalty	0.769	0.773	0.837	---	---
PBC	0.788	0.777	0.854	---	---

5. Conclusion

According to the obtained results, thirteen factor affecting CPI were identified and confirmed in the Iranian context, namely “corporate social responsibility”, “customer knowledge and awareness”, “perceived risk”, “retailer’s commercial image”, “customer’s personality characteristics”, “social identity”, “product features”, “attitude”, “country-of-origin”, “perceived value”, “subjective norm”, “loyalty”, and “perceived behavioral control”. The main contribution of this study is to develop a conceptual model for purchase intention of foreign food products in the Iranian context. The proposed model presents a comprehensive set of the factors affecting the Iranian CPI, while there are few studies in this field. Generally, the proposed model could provide useful insights into international food companies and national retailers. First, our findings could provide insight into the cognition of the factors affecting CPI.

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