

## Customer Attitude, Subjective Norms, And Perceived Behavioral Control Towards Customer Purchase Intention: A Case Study of Fast-Food Restaurant in Penang Malaysia

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine factors influencing customer's purchase intention to dine at fast-food restaurants in Penang Malaysia. Previous literature review revealed that customer's attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control were found to influence customer purchase intention. This study employed a quantitative approach and a total of 386 responses were successfully collected with a return rate of 93.2%. Pearson and multiple regression analysis were used to measure the relationship between variables. Towards the analysis, it was found that customer's attitudes and perceived behavioral control were found to influence customer purchase intention partially and it is clear that subjective norms do not affect customer purchase intention. Clearly, the results show that the findings were not in line with some of the previous studies, presumably because of the different geographical sampling recruited in this study. Hence, the findings of the study can be used to assist fast-food restaurants in Penang or other states in developing strategies, marketing plans, and to understand the dynamic of the customer's purchase intention. It is hoped that the findings can be used as an alternative course of action in developing their short and long-term business planning.

**Keywords:** Fast Food, Purchase Intention, Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control

**Introduction**

This study was conducted during the height of the Pandemic Covid 19. Hence, to explain some of the literature review during that time is deemed to be important. The coronavirus pandemic has shocked the world in an unprecedented way. Earlier in March 2020, the virus spread rapidly, as a result, it was revealed that 6,403,242 deaths and 575,333.60 infections were recorded from all over the world (Berita Harian, 2020). For that reason, the Malaysian Government has taken drastic measures to implement the Movement Control Order (MCO) known as the lockdown on March 18, 2020 (Kim, Kim, Lee, & Tang, 2020). The virus was known to be contagious and it can only be mitigated by minimizing human physical contact and proper measures such as masks at any public places. Due to that, one business entity that was highly affected was the fast-food restaurant. A fast-food restaurant is commonly defined as an entity that sells food and drinks with less waiting time. In Malaysia, fast-food restaurants (FFRs) such as Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken, MARRY BROWN, McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Subway, and some other brands were known to be among the most visited fast-food restaurants. Throughout the year, the number of fast-food restaurants has grown significantly (Ariffin, Ng, & Mohsin, 2021). Since the outbreak, fast-food restaurants have been severely affected as the government procedures to sell the food are still unclear. Due to the circumstances, studying customers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control towards customer purchase intention in fast-food restaurants during the pandemic was found to be important.

This study is conducted as to examine the relationship between customer attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control toward customer purchase intention in Fast-Food restaurants in Penang. This concept of restaurant is so popular because one of their main business strategies is to sell food and drinks with less waiting time (Dittmer & Keefe, 2006; Lahap, et al., 2018). The fast-food restaurant remains the leading choice for Generation Y and is known to have the biggest consumers with substantial purchasing power, notwithstanding it benefits the food and beverage businesses (Jia, Luo, Li, Zheng, Xiao, & Luo, 2019). This phenomenon has led to a growing number of fast-food restaurants around the world (Lahap et al., 2018, Verma, Chua, & David, 2013; Kara, Kaynak & Kucukemiroglu, 1995). Additionally, the pandemic was known to affect various food and beverage businesses, especially transportation services, dining, tourist attractions, and retail stores (Berita Harian, 2020). Ajzen's (1991) framework on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was chosen as his research explained that a person's actual behavior in carrying out a certain action (purchase intention) is directly controlled by someone's behavior intention, which is influenced by customer attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control.

**Literature Review*****Customer Attitude and Customer Purchase Intention Towards Fast Food Restaurant***

Ajzen's (1991) works explained that people's attitude is manifested by their behavior. The common perception of customers on fast-food restaurants are; less waiting time, fast, clean, tasty, and safe (Wahlen, van der Horst, & Pothoff, 2016). When it comes to analyzing consumer behavior, among the most important tenets is assessing customer's attitudes toward buying process (Salamzadeh, 2015; Ghoochani, Torabi, et al., 2018). Moghadamzadeh, Ebrahimi, Radfard, Salamzadeh, and Khajeheian (2020) emphasized that customer attitude is a crucial component of decision-making on food choices towards purchase intention. Imtiyaz, et al., (2021) postulated that the product and sensory appeal

influenced customer attitude. Besides that, customer eating behavior is also influenced by the taste, flavors, cooking method, and color of the food (Ariffin, et. al., 2021). Furthermore, the taste of a food is the most important aspect in determining consumer attitude (Lan, et al., 2022; Franchi, 2012). Fast food restaurants are popular because people who live a hectic life and have little time to cook prefer to buy ready food (Xiao, Yang, & Iqbal 2019; Mat, Zulqernain & Zaid, 2016). To support that contention Rezai, Teng, Shamsudin, Mohamed, and Stanton's (2017) study has discovered that there is a high correlation between customer attitude and customer purchase intention.

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between attitude towards Generation Y purchase intention in fast-food restaurants.

### ***Subjective Norms and Purchase Intention Towards Fast Food***

Subjective norms can be defined as social influences in which a person's behavior influences others for several reasons (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). In addition, subjective norms can also be defined as someone's behavior that was approved and supported by an individual or a group of people. Nejati et. al., (2011) ascertained that a subjective norm is an act where someone's behavior is aligned with people's view. Purchase intentions in general were known to be influenced by family, friends, co-workers, and the media. Concerning that, customers are motivated to visit a fast-food restaurant due to several reasons, as Xiao et al., (2019) and Goyal and Singh (2007) explained that pleasure, atmosphere, and entertaining friends were among the primary reasons. In the classic study, it was discovered that parents, peer groups, and friends were found to be the main reason that shapes a person's intention to purchase food or beverage (Kulkarni & Nithyanand, 2013). Moreover, subjective norms are known to have a huge impact on customer's purchasing behavior. This is supported by Joshi & Rahman's (2016) study explains that subjective norms are vital foundations for determining a person's purchase intention. Therefore, it can be assumed that consumer tendency to visit fast-food restaurants is determined by social influence (Rezai et al., 2017). As a result, a hypothesis is proposed based on the subjective norms.

**H2:** There is a positive relationship between subjective norms towards Generation Y purchase intention in fast food restaurants.

### ***Perceived Behavioural Control and Purchase Intention Towards Fast Food***

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) refers to an individual's belief in his or her ability to facilitate a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioral control (PBC) in essence, considers some major barriers that people encounter when engaging in a behavior (Vab & Hansen, 2016). Previous research revealed that price and food availability as the perceived barriers to purchase intention (Al-Swidi, et. al., 2014; Budhathoki, et. al., 2022). Meanwhile, a lower price has a positive effect on consumers' intentions to buy fast food (Xiao et al., 2019). Perceived behavioral control (PBC) is also known to have a significant impact on consumer intention to consume authentic food (Ting, De Run, Cheah, & Chuah, 2016). Chang, Ma, and Chen's (2019) study has found that perceived behavioural control significantly influences consumers to purchase fast food meals. Therefore, it can be proposed that perceived behavioural control plays a significant factor in customer's purchase intention and the final hypothesis is offered.

**H3:** There is a positive relationship between perceived behavior control and Generation Y purchase intention in a fast food restaurant.

### Customer Purchase Intention Towards Fast Food

Purchase intention in the food and beverage context is defined as the act of pre-decision-making that supports the reason why a person buys a particular food or beverage from various fast-food restaurants (Shah, et. al., 2012) Chen, Feng, He, and Liu, (2022) study described purchase intention as a situation where a consumer tends to pre-analyses what to buy for a specific reason and value. In addition, customer purchase intention is based on special circumstances which influence their buying behavior. For example, some people go to fast-food restaurants because they want to eat something that can be prepared immediately, nevertheless, some people are motivated due to the authentic taste of the food, and others may be driven by the diverse selection of food offered in the fast-food restaurant. Purchase intention is normally influenced by the norms and values offered by food operators and it became a focal point for food and beverage operators to sell their products or services. Some social science scientists have found that purchase intention reflects consumers' assessments and positive reasoning toward an item or brand they buy (Gidakovic, Koklic, & Zabkar, 2022). In addition, they also suggested that purchase intention is a detailed judgment by the customers about the item and its components. Henceforth, studying customer's purchase intention is seen to be significant, because giving value and fulfilling customers' needs and wants is the focal point in any fast-food restaurant.

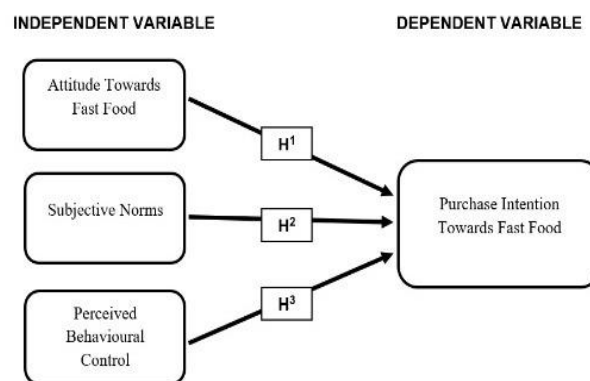


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control towards customers purchase intention. Sources: (Ajzen,1991)

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## Methodology

### Research Design and Sampling

In this study quantitative approach was employed to examine customers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control towards purchase intention among Generation Y towards fast-food restaurants in Penang Malaysia. Generation Y is also known as the 'digital natives' or 'millennials' because the upbringing of this generation is bounded by digitalization. Since, this research is looking for a mass opinion on purchase intention, recruiting a substantial number of respondents is seen to be important. Thus, this research is targeting Generation Y who are residing, working, and studying and have experience patronizing any fast-food restaurants in Penang.

Only Generation Y (born 1981 – 1994) was chosen since they were known as the largest workforce with substantial purchasing power and they are the majority of the workforce in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). According to the government's official data, Penang can be divided into two areas which consist of 5 districts. They are Seberang Perai Utara, Seberang Perai Tengah, Seberang Perai Selatan (Mainland), Daerah Timur Laut,

and Daerah Barat Daya (Island). The total population of Penang is around 1.74 million (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). In general, this generation group was known to have limited time to cook due to time constraints, family matters, and work. From the analysis, only 386 (93.2%) (n = 386) usable responses can be used, as the remaining were excluded as they were found to be unfit (screening process).

### ***Instrumentation***

In collecting the invaluable data, a set of e-questionnaires was developed by using Google form and it was divided into five (5) sections. All questions are using 6-point Likert Scales. The scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree, to 6 = Strongly agree was adopted in the questionnaire to measure the responses. There were 5 sections. Section A comprises six (6) questions on demographic profile (age, marital status, occupation, income level, and average working hours per day). The questionnaire was distributed through social media, e-mail, X, and WhatsApp.

As for the questions, Ajzen's (1991) study was adopted and several sections were developed: Section B; attitude towards fast-food restaurants among Generation Y (8 items). Section C; Subjective norm towards fast-food restaurants among Generation Y (4 items), Section D; Perceived behavioural towards fast-food restaurants among Generation Y (6 items), and Section E; Purchase intention towards fast-food restaurants among Generation Y (5 items). Before that, a pilot test was conducted to measure the validity and reliability of the instrument whereby a total of 30 questionnaires were distributed to various entities.

### **Findings**

#### ***Demographic Respondents***

Table. 1 shows the results of the demographic respondents. 414 questionnaires were sent out and 386 responses were successfully collected, others were excluded after the screening process. The result shows that male respondents dominate the sample over female respondents. Most respondents were between the ages of 27 and 30. The majority of respondents are single and the remaining respondents are all married.

Table 1

*Demographic Profile (n=386)*

	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	183	47.4
	Male	203	52.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>386</b>	
Age	27-30	211	54.7
	31-34	74	19.2
	35-38	48	12.4
	39-41	53	13.7
Marital Status	Single	222	57.5
	Married	164	42.5
Occupation	Government	108	28.0
	Private Sector	118	30.6
	Personal Business	90	23.3
	Not Working	70	18.1
Income Level	RM10,000 Above	55	14.2
	RM5,000-RM9,000	78	20.2
	RM2,500-RM5,000	105	27.2
	RM0-RM2,500	148	38.3
Average	12 Hours Above	119	30.8
	Working 12 Hours	86	22.3
	Hours 8 Hours	181	46.9
	Per Day Total	414	100.0

**Pilot Test**

Following the completion of a pilot study, the results were examined by using Cronbach Alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha value for attitude is 0.928, 0.922 for purchase, 0.898 for perceived behavioural, and 0.868 for subjective norm. Therefore, all questions were found to be fit to be used in this study. The reliability scores for each construct are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2

*Reliability Test (Pilot test)*

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	No of items / Questions
Attitude	0.928	8
Subjective Norms	0.868	4
Perceived Behaviour Control	0.898	6
Purchase Intention	0.922	5

**Reliability Test**

The items on the questionnaire, the reliability, and a descriptive analysis of mean scores and standard deviations are all depicted below for each predictor. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for each dimension ranges from 0.881 to 0.920. *Attitude* scored the highest mean which is 5.78 with a standard deviation of 0.91. *Perceived behaviour* however scored the lowest mean with a 0.88 standard deviation. Then followed by *purchase intention* who scored 0.92 for standard deviation and 4.61 mean. The lowest mean score from the three (3) independent variables was the subjective norm (Mean: 3.91 / SD: 0.88). The result is depicted in Table.3



Table 3

*Reliability Test*

Items	No. of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Attitude	8	5.78	0.91
Subjective Norms	4	3.91	0.88
Perceived Behavioural Control	6	4.36	0.88
Purchase Intention	5	4.61	0.92

**Pearson’s Correlation**

In examining the relationship between variables Pearson correlations were employed. It shows that attitude and perceived behavior shared the same value which is 0.673, while subjective norm scored 0.631. Even though the three (3) hypotheses were supported, however, it can be contended that the relationship between three (3) independent variables and dependent variables was found to be mild relationship. The analysis is depicted in Table 4.

Table 4

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

Variables	Customer Purchase Intention	Hypothesis	
Attitude	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2- tailed)	.673 .000	Supported.
Subjective	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2- tailed)	.631 .000	Supported.
Perceived	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.673 .000	Supported

**Multi Linear Regression Analysis**

Based on Table 5, shows that  $r^2=0.553$  means that the variance of the dependent variable (Purchase intention) is explained by the independent variables (Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural). In this analysis, it was found that the relationship between three (3) predictors is  $r=0.553$ , therefore it can be postulated that the relationship between 3 independent variables towards the dependent variable is significant. However, from the value, it can be explained that the three variables have a mild relationship with customer purchase intention.

Table 5

*Multi Linear Regression Analysis*

Model Summary									
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	.744 <sup>a</sup>	.553	.550	.61899	.553	157.541	3	382	.000

A. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived, Subjective, Attitude  
 B. Dependent Variable: Customer Purchase Intention

A regression model that has been tested is shown in Table 6 using the ANOVA test to see if it is significant. The P-value was found to be  $P < 0.05$ . Indicating that the null hypothesis was ruled out, in this way, the regression model was shown to be relevant to the topic at hand.

Table 6  
ANOVA Model

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	181.084	3	60.361	157.541	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	146.361	382	.383		
	Total	327.445	385			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Purchase intention  
b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived, Subjective, attitude

Table 7 shows the coefficient result which is the standardized coefficient for attitude is 0.314, the subjective norm is 0.235, and perceived behavioural control is 0.287. Then the significance for attitude is 0.000, and subjective norms are 0.000, meanwhile, for perceived behavioural control, the significance is also 0.000. In the multiple regression analysis, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control do affect customer purchase intention. A comparison of the regression coefficients test of each variable further confirmed that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are highly affecting customer purchase intention towards fast food restaurants.

Table 7  
Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Coefficients								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.003	.244		.013	.989		
	Attitude	.401	.066	.314	6.056	.000	.434	2.303
	Subjective	.221	.046	.235	4.824	.000	.493	2.029
	Perceived	.364	.068	.287	5.322	.000	.402	2.487

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Purchase Intention

**Hypotheses**

Primary Hypotheses	Statement of Hypotheses	Remarks
H <sup>1</sup>	There is a positive relationship between attitudes towards Generation Y purchase intention in fast-food restaurants.	Partially Supported
H <sup>2</sup>	There is a positive relationship between subjective norms towards Generation Y purchase intention in fast food restaurants.	Not Supported
H <sup>3</sup>	There is a positive relationship between perceived behavior control and Generation Y purchase intention in fast food restaurants.	Partially Supported



**Discussion**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control toward purchase intentions. The findings of this study have shown that the three hypotheses offered were supported. The R-square finding is 0.553 which shows that 55.3% of the variance in consumer purchase intention toward fast food can be explained by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. According to the H<sup>1</sup> finding, customers' attitude toward fast food has a positive and significant relationship with customer purchase intention with mild relationship. This study's findings were in line with previous research, stating that customer attitude does influence intention (Brouwer & Mosack, 2015). This study also revealed that Generation Y attitude prefers to eat fast food because it is simple, fast, and delicious. This is especially true for those who work in the private sector because they only have short lunch breaks as fast food is affordable and available when the food is wanted. According to Finocchio and Dewes (2015), as a response to their hectic lifestyle, generation Y prefers to buy food that is ready to eat and easy to get. In contrast, subjective norms were found to have a negative relationship with customer purchase intention. The finding of this study was found to be inconsistent with previous research, which found that subjective norms improve purchase intentions (Al-Swidi, Huque, Hafeez, and Shariff, 2014). Therefore, it can be suggested that family members, friends, co-workers, and the media do not influence customer purchase intention. Finally, the H<sup>3</sup> finding indicates that the relationship between perceived behavioural control and customer purchase intention was partially supported by a mild relationship. This shows that someone's belief or value mildly influences purchase intention, and therefore, it can be contended that perceived behavioural control is not the main influencer towards Generation Y purchase intention.

**Conclusion**

In this study, some limitations were encountered. Firstly, future research can be done to improve this study by adding other factors that might influence Generation Y purchasing intention, and therefore, investigating other variables that affect customer purchase intention is important to enrich the area of study. Secondly, other generations such as X and Z should also be included as they are also playing a big part as customers that exist in Malaysia with high purchasing power. Marketers and the fast-food sector may use attitude and subjective norms, the two fundamental characteristics that affect customer purchase intention directly, and inculcate it in their marketing efforts. Another strong factor that supports customers to buy fast food is food delivery applications such as Food Panda, Grab Food, Lala Move, and others. These online food delivery applications boost the consumption of fast food and allow customers to order fast food anywhere without any difficulty (Lahap, Saupi, Said, Abdullah, and Kamal, 2023). In a recent study Rouhani, Stanley, Dynamic Team, and Adolph (2023) study confirmed that fast-food consumption had risen dramatically in recent years, notably among children and adolescents, and for that reason, an in-depth study about customer purchase intention is vital. As Dong, Du, and Gardner (2020) postulated customer purchase intention is not solely determined by someone's characteristics towards purchase intention, but it is also influenced by social interaction, cultural background, environmental surroundings, and upbringing that profoundly influence customer purchase intention.

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