

THE MALAYSIAN-CHINESE CONSUMERS PURCHASING INTENTION BEHAVIOR: THE CASE OF SEAFOOD AS A GIFT

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Abstract

Purpose of Study: This research aims to explore consumer purchasing behavior and examines the factors that affect the consumer purchasing intention behavior on seafood as a gift in Malaysian Chinese.

Methodology: There are many researches on the consumer purchasing behavior and gift-giving behavior. However, prior research in this particular topic of the combination of seafood and gift is limited. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) serves as the backbone of the study which gives inspiration to the development of the theoretical framework of 4A's marketing tools namely acceptability, awareness, accessibility and affordability to measure consumer purchasing intention behavior on seafood as a gift-giving item. The research conducted using the quantitative approach which focuses on the questionnaires with 234 respondents that provide fundamental connection to measure the relationship between empirical observation and quantitative mathematical expression. The data collected will be analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics software and Cronbach's Alpha is performed to test the reliability analysis while chi-square to test the independence variables.

Results: The findings are yet available since this report serves as the preliminary stage of the conduct of the research and the survey is conducted. The Malaysian seafood sector and food marketers may find this study useful in promoting the growth of the domestic seafood market in general and the adoption of marketing strategy in selection which may be the most effective to the consumers in Malaysia.

Key words: *Purchasing Intention, Acceptability, Awareness, Affordability, Accessibility, Seafood, Gift, Malaysia.*

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is among the countries with the highest fish consumption in the world that accounts for 60% of the total animal protein intake as compared to other animal products such as beef, poultry, mutton, and pork (Yusuf and Ali, 2018). Generally, fish and seafood have been continuously accountable as health promoting products. In the context of gift-giving. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) are used to assess the attitude of consumers and perceived behavioral control to determine the consumers purchasing intention behavior to purchase seafood as gift. For the first determinant of behavioral intention of TPB namely attitude, are used to refer to attitude and awareness of seafood as gift which resulted the independent variables of "awareness".

For the subjective norms, this referred to the society perception of seafood whether is of positive or negative view on seafood products. To quote a positive view example, the seafood is perceived as main source of protein. This TPB determinant leads to the independent variable of "acceptability". The third determinant of behavioral intention of TPB namely perceived behavioral control, referred to the factors that restrain consumers to purchase seafood. For example, food safety issues, price, channel of distribution, convenience, ease of preparation and etc which hold back consumers decision to purchase seafood. With the study of perceived behavioral control, lead to the projection of independent variables of "affordability" and "accessibility".

Adopting seafood as gift-giving items is very popular in the foreign countries such as China but is of a new and fresh idea which is yet popular in Malaysia market. Although there are retailers who have been involved in the promoting of seafood as a gift, the response is not as expected and consumers seems not attracted and aware about the concept. In order to identify the problems behind the low response on the seafood as a gift idea, the factors that affect the purchasing intention behavior on consumers using TPB which serves as the backbone of the study are carried out.

The understanding of consumers' awareness and acceptability towards seafood as a gift is very important for any food industry or food marketer as this is a new concept to Malaysians market. The understanding and knowledge about the relationship between purchasing intention behavior with accessibility and affordability of seafood as a gift will be used to assist the development of new seafood product concepts that fulfils the needs of consumers.

Similarly, this could reduce the level of risk of a marketing decision. A successful marketing strategy and program will enquire well thought objectives that identify the product attributes that could be successfully promoted in consideration of the budget limits, scarce resources, in order to develop an implementation plan that fit the industry and a plan to evaluate its effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumers make choices regarding the purchase of products constantly. This literature review starts with the theories and factors of consumer purchasing decisions, followed by study in consumer purchase decision of seafood and consumer purchase decision of gift.

Generally, seafood has been repeatedly described as the better source of protein as compared to other meat products. Malaysia is among the countries with the highest fish consumption in the world. As such, market research has been actively carried out to identify the market segments for promotional efforts. On the other hand, Andrew (2002) in reporting Belk's study, characteristics of gift are listed as practical; entertaining; prestigious; high quality; unusual; intellectual; (in)expensive; sporting; personal; fashionable; fun; lasting. In relation to that, giving seafood as gift may perceived as practical, prestigious, high quality, personal and fun which are subject to further study in the report. In the study of Wang *et al.* (2007) choice of gift may not be depend on personal value and motivation for gift-giving, it may also be a function of cultural values. In order to make the new way of seafood marketing effective and successful, it is essential to understand the consumer purchasing intention which leads to the purchasing behavior of seafood as gift (Umaru and Ombugus, 2017).

According to Nevin and Suzan (2010) consumers take into account criteria such as taste, nutritional value, reliability, quality, price and convenience of the food to make the purchasing decision. In the study of consumer intention, the inspiration is arised a framework consists of three independent determinants of behavioral intention which are attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. TPB postulates that attitude of consumers towards purchasing seafood are made up of their belief (acceptance) and awareness of the concept of seafood as a gift. Meanwhile, price (affordability) and convenience (accessibility) are the behavioral control on purchasing seafood as a gift. Thus, a structural approach on the study is formed and theoretical framework is developed based on the variables namely acceptability, accessibility, affordability and awareness.

Acceptability

It is absolutely important that the product is of acceptable before it is launched to the market. Generally, seafood is acceptable as daily meal but seafood as a gift is a particularly new concept. In the context of acceptability, the literature review begins with the consumer purchasing decisions on seafood followed by the gift purchasing decisions study. The quality, taste, ease of preparation, availability, nutritional value and the price of fish relative to other meats were found to be important factors that influence the purchasing of seafood in Malaysia. Nonetheless, seafood purchase decision is more complicated than other categories as there are competing message relating to safety, health and sustainability. Besides, some consumers are concerned about the preparation process of seafood, the cooking smell, preparation methods and the satisfaction level not comparable to meat.

In spite of the barriers and perceived behavioral control to purchase seafood, there are motives and positive factors that lead to seafood consumption in the review of literature. According to Karen *et al.* (2009) fish are perceived as a very healthy food due to its low content of fats and cholesterol, easy to digest as compared to meat which make fish more suitable to eat at night or as dinner meal. There are many motives that encourage the consumption of fish, while the main motives are health and taste (Karen *et al.*, 2009; Ushakov, 2017). It is generally acceptable that seafood is a healthy product for consumption. This can be further proven by the claimed that Malaysia is among the countries with the highest consumption in the world which account for 60% of the total animal protein intake stated by Department Veterinary Services, DVS 2007 (cited in Abdullahi *et al.* (2010)).

However, accepting seafood as consumption does not amount to accepting seafood as a gift. According to Clare (2003) in reporting Senior's study, states that each gift function as a method of communication as gift-giving is a cultural practice that help to define the character of a culture and the varying value systems. As such, selecting the gift is an important process as the gift object may deliver certain message to the receivers. How receivers perceived the seafood as gift is critical in the study as whether it is a positive or negative perception which affects the purchasing decision of consumers. Therefore to test the relationship between the acceptability of seafood products and the purchasing decision toward seafood as gift the following hypothesis is developed:

H1: There is relationship between acceptability of seafood products and purchasing decision toward seafood as a gift among Malaysian Chinese consumers.

Accessibility

There are multichannel retailers ranging from retail shop, internet, mail-order catalogs, TV shopping and so forth. In the gift shopping context, an individual will choose a channel which involves the least amount of overall perceived risk of the channel and the product (Hyun-Hwa and Jihyun, 2009). Gift-givers tend to avoid potential costs and risks that might be caused by their purchase such a delayed delivery, inferior product quality and bad customer services etc. This means the knowledge and familiarity of certain distribution channel or retail channel may have an impact on the givers' gift purchasing decision. Meanwhile, the knowledge and familiarity of a certain channel are closely related to the previous shopping experiences.

For instance, purchasing frozen seafood, which is a perishable good, may need extra care in keeping the quality which just similar to a take-out food which needed to be kept warm before reaching home for consumption. According to [Janice et al. \(2008\)](#) the primary factors that affect the decision of purchasing take-out food are location, time and convenience, followed by the packaging or container which is able to insulate food, and maintain the quality of food. In the context of the study, the product is frozen seafood which is a perishable good which needed an innovative container or packaging to ensure the seafood is not defrosted in a period of time, e.g. a few hours before the seafood is sent as a gift to the gift receiver in order to maintain its quality. Seafood is accessible from wet market to supermarket and hypermarket and even through online purchase, the packaging plays an essential factor as to whether the frozen seafood is portable from one place to another. The design of the packaging plays an important role in the gift purchasing decision. This is further supported by the study of Chinese cultural value and gift-giving behavior by [Wang et al. \(2007\)](#) as *mianzi* (saving face) is an important factor that could affect consumer buying decision which is highly related to the image gained by performing certain social roles. However, in contrast, packaging is argued to be irrelevant in many gift-giving situations as shelf packaging is not an indicator of the brand or product quality ([Andrew, 2002](#)). Nonetheless, the packaging for frozen seafood is believed to be essential as to its function to maintain the quality of frozen seafood. Therefore to test the relationship between the accessibility of seafood products and the purchasing decision toward seafood as a gift the following hypothesis is developed:

H2: There is a relationship between accessibility of seafood products and purchasing decision toward seafood as a gift among Malaysian Chinese consumers.

Affordability

As mentioned, the price of fish relative to other meats are an important factor that influences the purchasing of seafood in Malaysia ([Valentine and Attamah, 2017](#)). In the context of seafood as a gift, quoted in the aforementioned literature review, *mianzi* (saving face) plays a very important role in gift-giving. According to [ShiXiong et al. \(2010\)](#) in an empirical study of Chinese in gift-giving, people tend to participate in gift exchange and take full account of packaging, brand, price and other factors in selecting and purchasing gift as gift carries the identity of social status and to save face. Seafood is generally viewed as an expensive product which also acts as barriers to daily consumption. Therefore, taking seafood as a gift, the high price may be seen as a positive aspect for gift-giving in Chinese society due to *mianzi* (face).

On the contrary, the literature also reviewed that consumers are not willing to purchase the product which is perceived to be expensive without knowledge acquired about the particular product. However, the researcher has also highlighted the price tag functioned as a key indicator of quality:

“In the old days, you would get good (quality) fish. Today you don’t know how to distinguish ...firm flesh and eyes with shine...the quality have often been cut off” (p. 227). As such, the knowledge on seafood plays an essential role in determining the price of the seafood and this is closely related to awareness which is mentioned later. Therefore to test the relationship between the affordability of seafood products and the purchasing decision toward seafood as a gift the following hypothesis is developed:

H3: There is a relationship between affordability of seafood products and purchasing decision toward seafood as a gift among Malaysian Chinese consumers.

Awareness

Researchers have integrated concepts on how awareness could facilitate or constrain consumers’ purchasing decisions. In order to offer real opportunity to increase consumer demand, a generic advertising program is needed to educate consumers about the nutritional values of seafood, and food safety measures taken by the industry ([Walter and Farm, 2000](#); [Wang and Yang, 2018](#)). In addition to that, in the study of [Themistoklis et al. \(2010\)](#) product image and purchase behavior will improve if more information about quality and health benefits are provided. However, awareness of the need to trade-off between health and convenience was evident in the aforesaid research. Due to the complexity environment, the nutritional value and toxicology of seafood are different between wild caught fish and farmed fish. Nettleton (cited in [Diana \(2013\)](#)) states that farmed fish may have less nutritional value and higher level of pollutants as the food of farmed fish consists of formulated feed and lack the same food source as wild caught fish. As such, it is obvious that awareness would have a positive or negative impact on the purchasing decision of consumers on seafood.

The literature on gift-giving does not mention awareness as a factor that influences the selection of gift. Wolfenbarger (cited in [ShiXiong et al. \(2010\)](#)) states the motivation of gift-giving behavior are self-interest (egoism), obey social norms and pro-social behavior. Although brand choice plays an important role in gift-giving ([Andrew, 2002](#)) brand associations for a gift has little relation to do with the awareness and knowledge towards the particular gifts but the implication of superiority over other brands. Therefore to test the relationship between the awareness of seafood products and the purchasing decision toward seafood as a gift the following hypothesis is developed:

H4: There is a relationship between awareness of seafood products and purchasing decisions toward seafood as a gift among Malaysian Chinese consumers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To test the proposed hypothesis of this study 250 self-administered questionnaires were distributed among the individuals Chinese Malaysian. The softcopy of the questionnaires has been sent to the inbox of each individual on facebook after getting their consent to participate in this study.

The measurement questionnaire of the study is adopted from several past studies in this field which had a high level of validity and reliability. The list of questions and the sources of the questions are as below:

Table 1: Operationalization

Construct	Questions	Sources
Acceptability	1. I intend to purchase seafood as gift-giving in the near future. 2. I consider the gift-giving of seafood is presentable. 3. I consider the gift-giving of seafood is more practical than any other type of gifts. 4. I will serve seafood for guests. 5. Seafood gift-giving always accompanies Chinese New Year.	Karen <i>et al.</i> (2009); Siow (2012)
Awareness	1. In my opinion, seafood is healthier, has better quality and are safer than other meat products. 2. Seafood is the main source of protein and serves as a practical gift for any occasions. 3. Seafood is a nice family meal in any special occasions. 4. I have heard about seafood hamper as seafood can be packaged presentably and given as a gift.	Karen <i>et al.</i> (2009); Siow (2012)
Affordability	1. I do price checking from different places before purchasing gift. 2. I take advantage of coupons and in-store specials for gift-giving products. 3. I compare the quantity and price of the product I purchase with those other products in gift-giving.	Karen <i>et al.</i> (2009); Siow (2012)
Accessibility	1. Through online ordering, it is convenient for me to buy seafood as a gift. 2. The roles of the retailers are important when I shop for seafood as a gift. 3. Overall, seafood is relatively easy to obtain. 4. I shop during non-peak hours to save time and avoid crowds for seafood.	Karen <i>et al.</i> (2009); Siow (2012)
Purchasing Intention	1. I would absolutely consider buying one of the seafood packages shown above. 2. I am planning to buy one of the seafood packages shown above in the near future. 3. Overall, I find buying seafood as gift is presentable and good value for money. 4. I would recommend my friends to buy seafood as a gift.	Siow (2012)

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The following table illustrates on the demographic information of the respondents.

Descriptive analysis includes the distribution of data. William (2006) states that to list every value of variable and the number of persons who had each variable is the simplest distribution as distribution is a summary of frequency of individual ranges of values for a variable. The demographic information below comprises gender, marital status, age, level of education, level of income per month, and religion which is displayed using frequency distribution and percentage.

As refer to the Table 2, majority of the respondents are Malaysian Chinese female, which is 144 out of 234 respondents, which constitute 61.5% of the total respondents. Fischer and Arnold (1990) cited in Vassilis and Aviv (2010) argued that culturally determined females' role is widely recognized in gift shopping. As such, female respondents stand a larger portion of this research due to purposive sampling method. In the context of age, younger generation from age 18 to 34 comprises 86.4% of the total respondents are also made up due to purposive sampling method. This is because the seafood as gift idea is of anew gift-giving idea which younger generation are more prone to the new gift-giving idea. In the context of education level of the respondents, majority constitute degree holder, which is 49.6%. The level of income per month constitute majority of middle income range of respondents of below RM8000, which constitute 88.8% of the total respondents. Lastly, majority of the Malaysian Chinese respondents are Buddhist, which comprises 84.6% of the total respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Female	144 / 234	61.5
Male	90 / 234	38.5
Marital Status		
Married	72 / 234	30.8
Single	162 / 234	69.2
Age		
18 - 23	83 / 234	35.5
24 - 28	58 / 234	24.8
29 - 33	61 / 234	26.1
34 - 38	14 / 234	6.0
39 - 43	8 / 234	3.4
44 - 50	3 / 234	1.3
Above 50	7 / 234	3.0
Level of education		
SPM & Below	24 / 234	10.3
Diploma / STPM	79 / 234	33.8
Degree	116 / 234	49.6
Master	12 / 234	5.1
PHD	3 / 234	1.3
Level of income per month (RM)		
Below 2000	84 / 234	35.9
2001 - 4000	63 / 234	26.9
4001 - 6000	37 / 234	15.8
6001 - 8000	24 / 234	10.3
8001 - 10000	10 / 234	4.3
10001 - 12000	3 / 234	1.3
Above 12000	13 / 234	5.6
Religion		
Buddhist	198 / 234	84.6
Christian	30 / 234	12.8
Others	6 / 234	2.6

Normality Test

Generally, statistics inferences required that a distribution to be normal or at least near to normal. According to [Brown \(2011\)](#) in the application of testing for normality, a normal distribution has a skewness and excess kurtosis of 0. Therefore, a distribution that is close to those values then it probably close to normal. In addition, [Zikmund et al. \(2010\)](#) argued that the acceptable skewness and kurtosis values will be ± 1 which are suitable to test for the research normality.

Skewness refers to the shape of frequency or distributions probability which is the asymmetry of the distribution. “Positively Skewed” is a distribution with an asymmetric tail extending rightward while “Negatively Skewed” referred to distribution with an asymmetric tail extending leftward. As such, skewness ranges from minus infinity to positive infinity.

Kurtosis examines the horizontal movement of a distribution from a bell shape of a distribution or frequency. A zero value of kurtosis statistic implied a perfectly normal distribution. A positive kurtosis score describes a ‘pointed’ distributions while negative kurtosis score describes ‘flat’ distributions.

The table 3 illustrates the skewness and kurtosis of each variables tested in the research.

Table 3: Normality Test

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Standard error	Statistic	Standard error
Purchasing Intention	3.7821	1.10890	-.063	.159	-.071	.317
Acceptability	4.0043	1.00153	.116	.159	-.394	.317
Awareness	4.1293	.96955	-.192	.159	-.232	.317
Affordability	4.4217	1.04217	-.522	.159	.188	.317

Accessibility	4.1688	.84459	.099	.159	.082	.317
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Refer to the Table 3, the skewness and kurtosis of each variable falls into the acceptable range of nearly zero and within the range of ± 1 . It can be interpreted as there is a 95% confidence interval for both skewness and kurtosis score ranges from ± 1 . As such, the data collected meet the statistical inferences requirement as this is a normal distribution and various parametric analyses such as Multiple Regression, Pearson Correlation and so forth can be carried out in the research.

Validity Test

Suter (2006) cited in Lu (n.d) concludes that validity is the most important quality of a measured dependent variable in regards to the primary concern of the research. There are four types of validity namely content validity, predictive validity, concurrent validity and construct validity for the accomplishment of different research aims. However, construct validity, the population validity is to be adopted in this research which is the test of the constructed hypotheses that represent the concepts that are tried to be measured. In relation to the research on the factors affecting purchasing intention behaviour of seafood as a gift in Malaysian Chinese market, validity test is essential to test whether the variables or instruments which are acceptability, awareness, affordability and accessibility measures what it is supposed to be measured.

In order to measure sampling adequacy, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure is adopted. On the other hand, Barlett's test of sphericity is to test the null hypothesis that the variances of the differences are equal. Furthermore, factor loading for each variable is to represent the correlation between each variable and each factor.

The table 4 illustrates the KMO value, significance level and factor loading for each variable.

Table 4: Validity Test

Construct	KMO Value (≥ 0.6)	Measurement Item	Factor Loading (≥ 0.5)	Cronbach's Alpha
Acceptability	0.839	Acceptability1	.872	0.848
		Acceptability2	.871	
		Acceptability3	.837	
		Acceptability4	.613	
		Acceptability5	.735	
Awareness	0.720	Awareness1	.827	0.752
		Awareness2	.866	
		Awareness3	.800	
		Awareness4	.562	
Affordability	0.718	Affordability3	.846	0.752
		Affordability4	.863	
		Affordability5	.876	
Accessibility	0.701	Accessibility1	.677	0.848
		Accessibility2	.803	
		Accessibility3	.670	
		Accessibility4	.711	
Purchasing Intention	0.841	Intention1	.906	0.931
		Intention2	.920	
		Intention3	.917	
		Intention4	.905	

Multiple Regression

Multiple regression is adopted to predict the value of a variable based on the value of two or more variables, where the dependent variable is to be predicted using the independent variables (Lund Research Limited, 2013). In addition to that, multiple regression also determine the generally fit of the model and relative contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable through variance explanation. In this research, purchasing intention behaviour on purchasing seafood as a gift is the dependent variable while the independent variables are acceptability, awareness, accessibility and affordability. In other words, multiple regression is adopted to understand whether the purchasing intention behaviour of consumers on seafood as a gift can be predicted based on the four (4) factors of acceptability, awareness, accessibility and affordability. As such , the equation for multiple regression in this research can be interpreted as follows:

Equation1: Multiple regression

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Purchasing Intention} = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{Acceptability}) + \beta_2(\text{Awareness}) + \beta_3(\text{Affordability}) + \beta_4(\text{Accessibility}) + \varepsilon$$

Where,

α (Alpha) = constant or intercept

β (Beta Coefficient) = Slope

ε = Standard error of coefficient

The tables below illustrate the result of multiple regression analysis for each variable tested:

Table 6: Multiple Regression – Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.849 ^a	.722	.717	.59028
a. Predictors: (Constant), Affordability, Acceptability, Accessibility, Awareness				

Table 7: Multiple Regression – ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	206.718	4	51.680	148.320	.000 ^b
	Residual	79.791	229	.348		
	Total	286.510	233			
a. Dependent Variable: PurchasingIntention						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Affordability, Acceptability, Accessibility, Awareness						

Table 8: Multiple Regression – Coefficients

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.588	.216		-2.718	.007		
	Acceptability	.703	.058	.635	12.121	.000	.444	2.255
	Awareness	.178	.058	.156	3.052	.003	.467	2.140
	Accessibility	.186	.065	.142	2.855	.005	.493	2.028
	Affordability	.010	.046	.010	.220	.826	.642	1.557
a. Dependent Variable: Purchasing Intention								

Refer to Table 6, the data in model summary model are used to determine how well the regression model fits the data. In a cross-sectional study, R Square that reached 30% is acceptable. However, adjusted R square value will be more accurately in the interpreting of the data, which is 0.717 from the multiple regression analysis in this research. As such, this indicates that 71.7% of the purchasing intention of seafood as a gift (dependent variable) can be explained by acceptability, awareness, accessibility and affordability (independent variables). Therefore, the research objectives are fulfilled as the correlation is strong.

Refer to Table 7, F-ratio in the ANOVA table represent whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data obtained. The F-ratio reported a value of 148.320 with the significance level of 0.0001. As such, the independent variables are statistically significant to predict the dependent variable, $F(4, 229) = 148.320, p < .0005$. In a nutshell, the regression model is a good fit for the data.

Refer to Table 8, the assumption of multiple regression of VIF less than 10 is met. The VIF obtained from the multiple regression analysis are from 1.557 to 2.255, which is less than 10. In the context of the Beta, acceptability reported the highest value of 0.703 as compared to the other variables, accessibility of 0.186, and awareness of 0.178 and lastly affordability of 0.010. This represented 100% increase in acceptability will lead to 70.3% increase in purchasing intention; 100% increase in accessibility will lead to 18.6% increase in purchasing intention; 100% increase in awareness will lead to 17.8% increase in purchasing intention; 100% increase in affordability will only lead to 1% increase in purchasing intention. As such, acceptability reported as the most important variables that affect the purchasing intention behavior of seafood as gift, followed by accessibility, awareness and affordability. However, only three (3) variables, namely

acceptability, accessibility and awareness that will positively affect purchasing intention behavior on consumers on seafood as gift when interpreting together with the significance level reported, acceptability (0.001), accessibility (0.005), awareness (0.003) and affordability (0.826). A significance level of more than 0.05 rejected hypotheses -H2. In conclusion, hypotheses - H1, H3 and H4 is accepted.

Table 9: Hypothesis Statements

	Hypothesis Statements	Results
H1	There is a relationship between acceptability of seafood products and Malaysian Chinese consumer purchasing intention behavior toward seafood as a gift.	Accepted
H2	There is a relationship between affordability of seafood products and Malaysian Chinese consumer purchasing intention behavior toward seafood as a gift.	Rejected
H3	There is a relationship between accessibility of seafood products and Malaysian Chinese consumer purchasing intention behavior toward seafood as a gift.	Accepted
H4	There is a relationship between awareness about seafood products and Malaysian Chinese consumer purchasing intention behavior toward seafood as a gift.	Accepted

DISCUSSION

Referring to the results obtained from the study, three (3) factors are identified as the factors which will directly affecting the purchasing intention behavior of Malaysian Chinese consumer toward seafood as a gift. The three (3) factors namely acceptability which shown the most significant factor, followed by accessibility and lastly awareness. The acceptability factor can be explained by the issues concerning seafood as gift which are cultural factor, unfavorable smell, storage, the ways of handling and cooking which is further elaborated below. Accessibility appears to be the second important factor as most respondents claimed that the role of retailers is important when shopping for seafood. This may due to the lack of knowledge of consumers towards seafood product. As to the last factor of awareness, most respondents show they have less heard about seafood hamper where seafood can be packaged presentably and given as a gift. Therefore, the business entrepreneurs need to put effort to market the seafood product and make sure customers understand about the seafood gift ideas and to create a positive perceptions on the said idea.

Furthermore, rather than just identify the factors that affect the purchasing intention behavior of Malaysian Chinese consumer on seafood as a gift, this research also reflects the current perception of the respective consumers towards seafood products. Throughout the research and study, it reflects that Malaysian Chinese consumers generally agree that seafood is healthier, has better quality and are safer than other meat product which serves as a nice family meal in any special occasions. The respondents would generally serve seafood for guests and they consider seafood gift-giving is always accompanies Chinese New Year and refer as a more practical gift than any other type of traditional gift. However, the price is not a factor that would affect the purchasing intention behavior when selecting seafood as a gift but perhaps would be a factor if seafood product is purchased for consumption. In order to sustain the price and seafood product consumption relationship, further research in this area is needed to be conducted.

In general, the study has supported the previous studies which has mentioned in the Chapter Two of Literature Review. An increase demand on the overall improvement in the seafood image is needed in order to increase seafood consumption and purchasing intention. There are increasing needs for innovative seafood products.

The most essential factor that is needed to increase the purchasing intention behavior on seafood as a gift in Malaysian Chinese market will be making the seafood as gift acceptable to the particular market. Different approaches are recommended to make seafood as gift as acceptable to the market. However, before going to the strategy of making the product acceptable to the market, we shall first outlines the issues on why seafood as gift may not be acceptable to the market.

Issues related to acceptability of Seafood as gift:

Cultural factor:

In Chinese culture, gift-giving is a traditional manner and always accompany with occasions such as Chinese New Year, Lantern Festival, birthdays and so forth. As such, gift-giving is a way to deliver wishes and good messages to the recipients. There are gifts which are prohibited due to hidden unfaithful message. For instance, giving clock is prohibited during a person's birthday as giving clock in Chinese means "song zhong" which translated as sending the person to his / her dead end, which in another hand cursing the person to die. Similarly, giving seafood as gift, says, a dead frozen fish, which may reflect the message as describing the recipient as a dead fish or a curse or somewhat similar inferior messages.

Smell:

The fishy smell of seafood which is unfavorable may discourage the purchase of seafood as a gift. When people select gift, the outlook and appearance are important to make a perfect gift. By nature, seafood contained its fishy smell, moreover when it is not frozen. Therefore, it is essential to keep the seafood frozen at all times to avoid and reduce the unfavorable smell.

Storage:

Dry goods such as biscuits and chocolates are easier to be kept and handle as compared to seafood. If people would consider purchasing seafood as a gift to others, the recipients' cold storage availability such as freezer and refrigerator to maintain the seafood freshness before cooking is in one's consideration. Similarly, if the seafood is to send to someone at a distance which may take up a few hours before the goods reach the recipients, the storage of the seafood to maintain its freshness is of concern too.

Handling and cooking:

People may find seafood as difficult to handle and not everyone will know how to cook seafood. When come to gift selection, readymade products are always preferred choice as it reduces the risk of wrong gift selected to the respective recipients, moreover if the recipient is not closely connected personnel to the giver.

With all the mentioned issues above that restricted the seafood products as gift, the recommended actions and solutions are given to have seafood as a gift to be acceptable to the market.

Proposals to encourage acceptability of seafood as gift

Packaging:

First and foremost, a functional and presentable packaging is considerably important to make seafood as gift a success before any other actions taken which will be mentioned in the later part. In the context of a functional packaging, a cooler bag is recommended to store the seafood products. The cooler bag is innovatively designed to function as a storage which could keep the frozen seafood at its frozen state or at least maintain the frozen seafood for few hours while reaching the recipients or before the recipients able to put the seafood into the freezer. Invariably, the frozen seafood which could maintained at its temperature would then be able to avoid or reduce the fishy unfavorable smell if go defrost. Rest assured, a functional cooler bag has to be presentable as a gift in the eyes of the givers and the recipients. Presentable cooler bag refers to its design that is eye catching, premium and view as a perfect gift that suit all occasions. As such, the shape and the color scheme plays an important role in this context.

Selection of seafood products:

There are many seafood products in the market ranging from the cheap and low end market to the premium and expensive high end market products. The cheap and low end products refers to any seafood below the average price such as inferior fish, kembong fish, and so forth which could easily get from the wet market every day. However, the medium to high end seafood products are such as scallops, lobsters, whole big sea prawns, fresh water prawns, coral trout, Chinese pomfret and so forth which may only available during certain seasons or through special request which not easily obtain or a premium price is required. If seafood products are to be given as a gift to recipients, a medium to premium seafood products are strongly recommended. This is very much related to the nature and purpose of gift-giving. Traditionally, dead fish may reflects a hidden inferior message in the Chinese market similarly to the incidence of giving clock during ones' birthday as mentioned previously during cultural factor above. On the contrary, frozen coral trout or empurau which cost a few hundred dollars may bring different meaning as a premium gift or a sharing of wealth. In addition, fish is a symbol of wealth retention in Chinese which is generally printed in the "ang pau" during Chinese New Year. Besides, other seafood products such as sea white prawns are main dishes during big occasions in the Chinese market. Scallop has the meaning of "bringing son" in the direct translation of the Chinese name of scallops, *daizi*. Cultural issues can be overcome with the proper selection of seafood products and the focus of the right descriptors in proper marketing plans.

Right descriptors in marketing:

The innovative way of describing the seafood products may overcome the cultural factors that restricted the seafood products as gift. Finding the positive, righteous, creditable and honorable perfect words could be time consuming but the marketing effect would be tremendous which may change the negative perceptions of customers on seafood and hence may successfully promote the seafood as premium gift in any occasions. Right descriptors also contribute to the branding which could be presented through video or the traditional forms of marketing tools.

User friendly and secret cooking recipe:

Not everyone knew how to handle and cook seafood. For gift-giving item, people tend to select readymade products or easy to handle products unless the gift is really special and meaningful in the hands of recipients. Therefore, in order to make raw frozen seafood as a gift, certain actions should be taken to make the gift special or at least innovative enough

which intrigue the interest of people on the handling of seafood products. One instance could be providing special recipe yet easy to handle and user friendly method of seafood cooking.

Market Segmentation and Product position:

For this research, only Malaysian Chinese is selected for the studies which serve as the market segmentation strategy that only defines the Malaysian Chinese market for seafood product as gift. Different marketing and positioning strategy is applicable to different market segments base on the cultural differences due to different race and cultural background. A parable, a 50% filled water will be viewed differently. An optimist may will as half full while the pessimist may view as half empty. It is important to understand the selected customers' needs and product positioning is essential to create a positive perception. A thorough research on Malaysian Chinese market has indicates that acceptable is the core factor which will influence the purchasing intention behavior on seafood as gift while affordability are not relevant. As such, product position strategy is recommended to describe seafood gift as premium and special which give "face", *mianzi* to the gift giver which has mentioned earlier in literature review. Generally, most customers buy on an emotional level. Product positioning is important to define the needs and emotional wants of the consumers, which in this study is the Malaysian Chinese.

Marketing tools:

In this study, end user market is focused for the research. As such, the marketing tools which is effective for the end user market is recommended taking into consideration of the latest environmental conditions in this decade where the research is carried out. According to [Seikoo \(2013\)](#) many companies find success in using radio spots to correspond with television efforts in reaching as many people as possible both at home or while in the car. Commercial television advertisement may be a popular marketing tool before 80s while due to the advancement of technology, political, environmental and social factors, internet and radio advertisement have too proved to be an economically effective marketing tool for the end user market. In the context of internet, world wide web and other social networking websites such as facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and so forth has been an effective tools to promote the idea of seafood gifts. Those social networking websites not only enable the access to tremendous end users but also economically and cost savings as compared to traditional commercial television advertisements. In the context of media, radio is recommended to be used as an effective marketing tool to create awareness and promoting the products to end users. Due to market segmentation strategy of Malaysian Chinese market, Chinese radio spot will be the appropriate marketing tool with the effective use of marketing budget.

Proposals to encourage accessibility of seafood as gift

In the context of accessibility, it can be increased through the recommended methods below:

Online ordering:

As the World Wide Web and social networking websites are recommended to be used as a marketing strategy to create awareness, accessibility as refer to ordering and purchasing can also be done online. In this research, respondents generally respond in favorable that it is convenient to purchase seafood through online ordering. Irrespective of whether the response of online purchase is favorable in the short term, e-commerce is regarded as a powerful tool in the future. If manageable, online ordering and purchasing should be made available as these will be beneficial in the long run.

Business Partners or over the counter:

In order to make seafood gift package accessible to the customers, accessing to the popular hyper market would be a good option. The local hyper markets are such as Tesco, Giant and Eon (formerly known as Jaya Jusco). The selection of the location has very much to do with the product positioning which has mentioned earlier. Good business partner needed to be selected carefully so that seafood gift package would be easily accessible to the targeted market.

Stand-alone Shops:

Traditionally, stand-alone shops are a popular option if there is sufficient budget to utilize to execute the seafood gift project. Shops in the location of high human traffic and Malaysian Chinese market could be costly. However, standalone shops would be effective in promoting seafood gift ideas and product branding. Retailers are there to assist the customers which are important in the eye of respondents in this research.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES RECOMMENDATION

As English is widely used language internationally, survey questionnaires in English are created. However, this study is based on the research on Malaysian Chinese, therefore a Chinese version questionnaires could add advantage to contribute to a more precise result if respondents could understand the questions better in Chinese. In addition, the survey questionnaires are distributed to Malaysian Chinese respondents who are located in the urban area of Malaysia. Therefore, the respondents do not represent the Malaysian Chinese as a whole in this study.

To overcome the limitation of the current study it is advisable if the future studies use a larger sample size and try to have wider coverage of data collection (perhaps from small cities and suburban areas. In addition as the R square of the study is

0.717 which means only 71.7% of the purchasing intention of seafood as a gift (dependent variable) can be explained by acceptability, awareness, accessibility and affordability (independent variables). It seems that the model can be further improved with more factors beaded into the model. For example, health knowledge, satiation and quality of seafood can be included into the framework which may result to a better and more precise outcome.

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