Factors Influencing the Purchase Decision of Perfumes with Habit as a Mediating Variable : An Empirical Study in Malaysia

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Abstract

The majority of the Malaysian consumers prefer to use perfumes since the average daily sunshine duration in Malaysia ranges from 4-8 hours per day, irrespective of the months of the year. The decomposed stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model was applied in this study with the purchase characteristics of perfumes form the stimulus (S), habit as the organism (O), and the purchase decision as the response (R). About 164 respondents in Peninsular Malaysia were included in this primary questionnaire survey, of which 81 (49.4%) favored branded perfumes and 83 (50.6%) preferred non-branded perfumes. The attractive packaging and seasonal variations in fragrance and flavor of the perfumes were highly prioritized by the respondents. The significant findings of the study revealed that habit of using perfume mediates the relationship between message framing and perceived quality on the purchase decision of perfumes. Surprisingly, there was no significant difference between branded and non-branded perfumes when the quality of the perfume was well maintained. Also, there was no significant difference in the usage of perfumes between men and women and between the races Malays and Chinese. The practical contribution of the present study involves in considering 'habit' as the mediating variable which has direct and indirect implications on the purchase decision of perfumes. The established results of this article have many business implications for both manufacturers and consumers of perfumes.

Keywords: **S-O-R model, purchase decisions, brand, habit, Malaysia**

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The top ten fragrance producing countries in the world are Brazil, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Belgium, Spain, France, and Switzerland, where Brazil leads global fragrances consumption as reported by Euromonitor International's *The Passport Fragrances Global* (2014). The GDP in Southeast Asia was expected to grow about 7% every year for the next decade (Nielsen, 2014). On the other hand, the cosmetic industry in Malaysia is having a rapid annual growth rate, which is at 13%, and has been one of the world's leading industries (Eze, Tan, & Yeo, 2012). Malaysians spend approximately US$500 million on cosmetic products annually. The local cosmetics together with toiletries market is valued at about RM 3 billion or US$ 800 million (Eze et al., 2012). The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for fragrances is about 4% in both constant value and volume terms. Apparently, this is due to higher purchasing power that has resulted in more consumers looking for premium skin-care products, fragrances, and color cosmetics (Euromonitor International,

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2013). According to San, Sim, Ling, and Hock (2012), Malaysian consumers prefer to use imported cosmetic products. The rapid growth of beauty and health market in Malaysia and around the globe (Eze et al., 2012) leads the international players to be established both internationally and locally due to strong brand reputations.

The ASEAN countries have a tropical climate where the condition is hot and humid throughout the year. Malaysia naturally has an abundance of sunshine, which actually leads to solar radiation. On an average, Malaysia receives about 6 hours of sunshine every day. Furthermore, the average temperature ranges from 20°C to 30°C on an average throughout the year (Malaysian Meteorological Department, 2014). In such hot weather conditions, sweat combined with the bacteria on the skin creates unnecessary body odour in human beings. This scenario creates an uncomfortable feeling and embarrassment to make public appearances. Thus, the perfume industry is having huge demand to upbeat the issue. In today's world, the care for self appearance is becoming extremely important. The rapid growth for personal care products in Malaysia is highly in demand, and perfumes are one item on the list. Perfumes and Eau de Cologne are listed under the category of cosmetic products (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2014). Perfumes used to be a very luxurious product, and the low income earners would not be able to afford it before. Besides that, perfumes are becoming a very popular choice of product as a gift for others on special occasions and also during festive seasons. It can be clearly seen that from being something non-essential and frivolous, perfumes have emerged as an essential product for daily usage in today's times.

Literature Review

In this research, the dependent variable, purchase decisions of perfumes are with five independent variables namely store image *(SI)*, message framing *(MF)*, perceived quality *(PQ)*, scheme characteristics *(SC)*, and subjective norms *(SN)*. The habit of using perfumes is included as a mediating variable and brand acts as the moderating variable.

(1) Store Image : Ailawadi and Keller (2004) and Iranmanesh, Jayaraman, Jamaludin, and Taghizadeh (2013) stated that store image has a significant impact on the retailers' attributes such as the environment to shop, services, and the display of the product. The stores were perceived in terms of number dimensions like attributes which eventually create the image of the store (Heijden & Verhagen, 2004). According to Heijden and Verhagen (2004), Grewal, Krishnan, Baker, and Borin (1998) conducted a study on the impact of store image towards the purchase intentions in bicycles. The study revealed that there was a significant positive relationship establishment present with store image and purchase intentions. Hence, this study chooses store image as one of the independent variable to be tested with purchase decisions of perfumes.

(2) Message Framing : Message framing is about the communications using words or images to convey a message (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Much research has been done on the message framing previously and has confirmed that there is an effect on the purchase intentions (Gendall, Hoek, Pope, & Young, 2006 ; Iranamanesh et al., 2013). According to Iranamanesh et al. (2013), message framing can be viewed as the message which has been framed like the price tags and its impact towards the consumers' response. Message framing is also about the types of dealings offered, in which there is something like price promotions (50% offer) or like giving free samples in terms of "buy one, get one free" (Jayaraman, Iranmanesh, Kaur, & Haron, 2013 ; Li, Sun, & Wang, 2007; Prakash & Pathak, 2014; Sinha & Smith, 2000). Thus, in this study, pricing was taken as one of the items to gauge the message framing of perfume products on the purchase decisions. Plenty of research has been done on the message framing previously and has confirmed that it has an effect on the purchase intentions (Gendall et al., 2006).

(3) Perceived Quality : Iranmanesh et al. (2013) mentioned that, according to Zeithaml (1988), perceived quality can be seen as the consumers' overall judgment towards a product's excellence. They also mentioned that

consumers' likeability about a certain brand, outlet, or the origin of the product influences the perceived quality (Pascale, Amal, & Li, 2000). The purchase of high quality of a certain product does not make an impact when consumers have high affinity towards it. Sadeghi, Tabrizi, and Noroozi (2011) conducted a research on the usage of perfumes and the perceptions of consumers. To their surprise, consumers viewed perfume products negatively when these were sold in an unmarked bottle. This indicates that consumers' perception varies with the change of even a small feature in a product (Maruthamuthu, Krishnakumar & Vasan, 2006; Prakash & Pathak, 2014). Hence, in this study, perceived quality was selected as one of the independent variables to be tested on the purchase decision of perfumes (Kiumarsi, Jayaraman, & Mohd Isa, 2014 ; Kiumarsi, Jayaraman, & Mohd Isa, 2015).

(4) Scheme Characteristics : Scheme characteristics can be generalized as the depth of the promotions offered in total besides this, the frequency of promotions have to be taken into consideration (Iranmanesh et al., 2013). Apart from this, it is very much relevant to highlight that Raghubir, Inman, and Grande (2004) said that scheme characteristics is one of the cues which lead to the consumer purchases. Some of the most important attributes in scheme characteristics of the perfume product are the bottle shape, easy to handle, and eye catching when displayed (Prakash & Pathak, 2014 ; Sadeghi et al.,2011). In this study, scheme characteristics were taken as one of the independent variables to be tested with purchase decisions of perfume by consumers. Among the items considered in scheme characteristics for perfumes are the bottle shape, flavor, the special features, and the depth of packaging.

(5) Subjective Norms : Subjective norms are perceived as friends, relatives, and closed ones' influence on a certain act (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Subjective norm is a social pressure in which the dilemma is to or not to perform a behavior. Hsu and Lu (2004) and Jayaraman, Ng, Stocker, and Kiumarsi (2016) mentioned that subjective norms are one of the main factors which influence consumer behavior. Since the behavior is influenced by intention, it is predicted to influence the decisions as well (Hsu & Lu, 2004). Thus, in this study, subjective norms were selected to represent an independent variable to be tested on purchase decision of perfumes.

(6) Habit of Using Perfumes : Habit can be referred to as the minimal usage of the cognitive effort when performing a particular behavior on a regular basis (Bamberg, Ajzen, & Schmidt, 2003). Habit was used in the past studies in theories, namely theory of planned behavior (TPB) and the norm-activation model (NAM) (Knocker & Blobaum, 2010). The variable 'habit' has been used in transportation and environmental studies (Klockner & Blobaum, 2010). This study is taking the integrative approach a step further to include habit in the S-O-R model. This is an entirely new approach to be undertaken as none of the past studies have linked habit as the organism (O) in the S-O-R model. Habit is chosen as the mediating variable because the past behaviors, which is the purchase characteristics in this study, is the best predictor for the future behavior of purchase decisions (Bamberg et al., 2003).

(7) Purchase Decisions of Perfumes : Purchase intention is closely related to purchase decisions, where the intentions are referred to just a possibility ; whereas, the purchase decisions refer to whether the actual purchase will take place or not. This is further supported by Wu and Cheng (2011), where they mentioned that purchase intention is about the possibility of consumers to plan to purchase a certain product in the near future. Apart from that, purchase intentions are used to predict the actual decisions to purchase. The purchase intention relates to behaviors of consumers in terms of planning to purchase a product (Jayaraman, Yun, Seo, & Joo, 2015). Generally, the past studies have proved that store image and perceived quality are positively associated with the purchase intentions (Grewal, Monroe, & Krishnan, 1998 ; Kaushik & Gupta, 2009 ; Prakash & Pathak, 2014 ; Siji, 2015; Vani, Babu, & Panchanatham, 2011). In the context of this study, the purchase decisions of perfumes refer to the consumers' future purchase of perfume products in the near future, which is in the next six months time. Thus, in the

current study, the literature of purchase intentions is being used to study the purchase decisions of perfumes (dependent variable) by Malaysian consumers.

Research Methodology

Generally, the population represents the interest group which has been chosen in order to generalize the study. The target population of this study is any consumer who had used branded/non-branded perfumes during the last three months (at the time of conducting the study). In marketing research studies, it typically has a significance level of 5%, a statistical power of 80%, and R^2 value of at least 0.25 (Wong, 2013). In order to determine the sample size, the number of constructs (subjective measurement measured on Likert scale 1-5) is multiplied by 10 respondents minimum. In the present study, there are seven constructs multiplied by 10 respondents minimum. According to this thumb rule, 70 respondents were required to conduct the research. In addition, Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2013) suggested that about 200 to 500 samples will be sufficiently representative to conduct management studies. In respect to this, previous research shows that it is the best to choose a sample size of 100 to 200. Thus, in this current study, the sample size chosen was 200. However, out of the 200 questionnaires which were distributed, the usable data was only taken from 164 respondents. The unit of analysis for this study is the individual Malaysian consumer whose age was above 15 years and who had been purchasing perfumes for his or her own usage in the last 3 months (at the time of conducting the study). The present study uses primary data source which was obtained through the distribution of hard copy questionnaire survey, and the data collected was used as the sample data for the analysis. The questionnaire was developed based on the theoretical framework using the S-O-R model to explain the behavior of consumers regarding the purchase decisions of perfumes.

The non-probability sampling method, namely purposive (judgment) sampling has been used in this study. The direct and indirect relationship of the variables have been explained in the research framework identified using SEM. The data collection was carried out by using a self-administered questionnaire survey. The hard copy questionnaire was distributed directly to the targeted respondents and the questionnaires were collected once the respondents were done with it. The questionnaire was developed to determine the purchase decision of perfumes. The measurement of variables is based on the Likert scale, which is *strongly agree* = 5 ; *agree* = 4; *neither agree nor disagree* =3 ; *disagree* = 2 ; and *strongly disagree* = 1. The questions used in the questionnaire were either adopted from or adapted from the previous researchers.

The questionnaire was divided into two main sections namely Part 1 and Part 2. The Part 1 focused on the respondents' profile, and it was used to establish the demographics data of the sampled respondents which are mainly profile variables. The Part 2 consisted of seven sections namely Section A to Section G. The variables tested under each section is store image *(SI)*, message framing *(MF)*, subjective norms *(SN)*, scheme characteristics *(SC)*, perceived quality *(PQ)* for independent variables (IVs), habit of using perfume *(HP)* as for mediating variable *(MV)*, and finally, purchase decision of perfumes *(PP)* by a consumer as the dependent variable (DV). The variable store image *(SI)* was measured using 7 items and one of it was adapted from Grewal et al. (1988) with some changes to suit the current study. The other two items were adapted from Collins-Dodd and Lindley (2003).

Meanwhile, the other four items were self constructed. The scheme characteristics *(SC)* was prepared by using five constructs, where one of it was adapted from Bitta, Monroe, and McGinnis (1981) and one from Raghubir et al. (2004). The remaining three items are self-constructed items in regard to the scheme characteristics. Message framing *(MF)* has six question items and subjective norms *(SN)* has four question items. The perceived quality *(PQ)* variable was measured by using five items. The mediating variable was measured using a 5- point Likert scale ranging from (1) being *strongly disagree* to (5) being *strongly agree*. The variable habit of using perfumes *(HP)* was measured by using six question items. All of these items were adapted from Klockner and Blobaum (2010) in order to suit the current study.

The dependent variable *(DV)* was purchase of perfumes *(PP)*, and it was measured using a 5- point Likert scale

ranging from (1) being *strongly disagree* to (5) being *strongly agree.* This variable was measured by using four items. The first two items were adapted from Grewal et al. (1988) with some changes so that it is relevant to the current study. The third item was adapted from Poddar, Donthu, and Wei (2009), and the final item was self-constructed. The data collection was carried out by using a self-administered questionnaire survey. The study was conducted across peninsular Malaysia. The hard copy questionnaires were distributed directly to the targeted respondents and were collected once the respondents were done with the same. The data was collected on January 10, 2014 and it took about 4 weeks time to achieve the targeted sample size, which is about 200 respondents. A pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents who were chosen arbitrarily to respond to the questionnaire survey.

(1) Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model : The first theory for consumer behavior was developed by Bagozzi (1986). The major three categories of consumer behavioral learning are classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and also the vicarious learning (Mowen, 1995). Classical conditioning involves making an association between an involuntary response and a stimulus, while operant conditioning is about making an association between a voluntary behavior and a consequence. In order to suit the research objectives of the current study, the purchase characteristic forms the stimulus *(S)*. The purchase characteristics are the independent variables *(IV's)*, namely store image *(SI)*, message framing *(MF)*, perceived quality *(PQ)*, scheme characteristics *(SC)* ; and subjective norms *(SN)* are factors which might link consumers during the purchase decisions of perfumes. These variables are supported by Jacoby (2002) with the re-conceptualized theory of stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) to determine the consumer's previous experience. The organism (O) present in this study is the habit of using perfumes *(HP)* which takes the role of the mediating variable. Meanwhile, the response *(R)* is the purchase decisions of perfumes *(PP).* The justification for using the S-O-R theory in this study is due to the fact of the relevance of the theoretical support extended in order to explore the marketing stimulus effect on consumers' purchase decisions of perfumes. Thus, the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model is the "best fit" for this study.

(2) Conceptual Research Framework : The objective of this research is to understand the factors influencing the purchase decisions of perfumes by Malaysian consumers. This study examines the relationship between dependent variable, purchase decisions of perfumes with five independent variables, namely store image *(SI)*, message framing *(MF)*, perceived quality *(PQ)*, scheme characteristics *(SC)*, and subjective norms *(SN)*. Habit of using perfumes is included as mediating variable and brand as the moderating variable. The research framework of this relationship is shown in the Figure 1.

(3) Hypotheses Development : Based on the literature review and the theoretical framework, the following research hypotheses are proposed for the study:

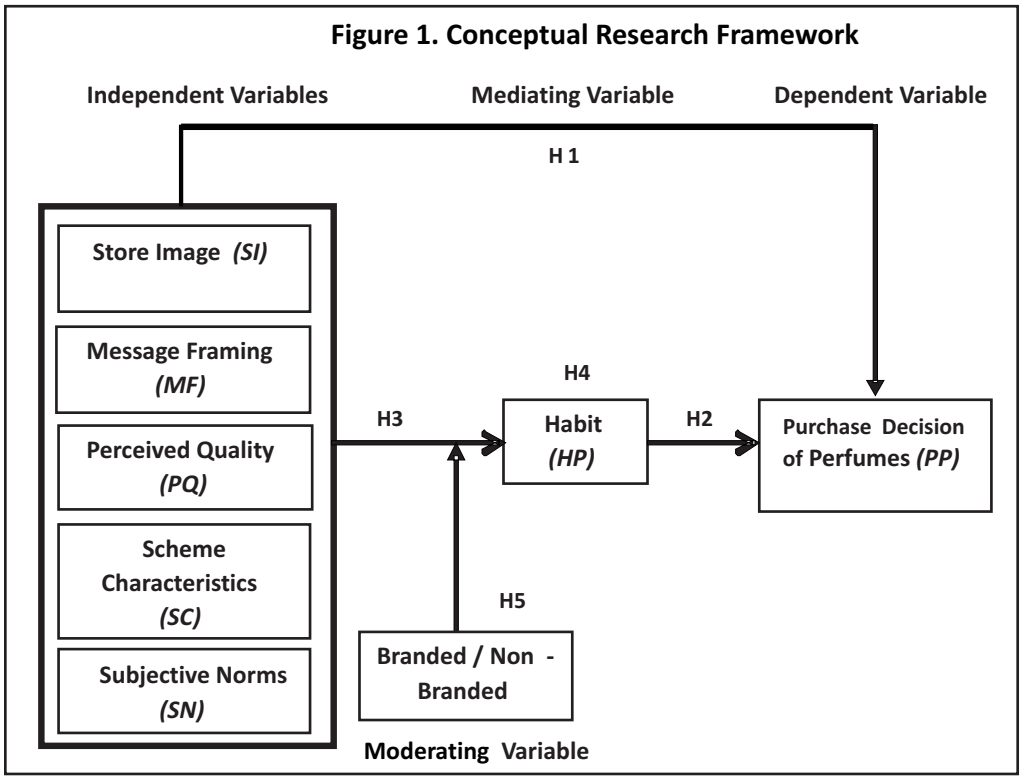
- **H1:** The purchase characteristics, namely store image *(SI)*, message framing *(MF)*, perceived quality *(PQ)*, scheme characteristics *(SC)*, and subjective norms *(SN)* have a positive influence on the purchase decision of perfumes *(PP).*

The relationships between habits of using perfumes *(HP)* on purchase decisions of perfumes *(PP)* resulted in the following hypothesis:

- **H2 :** The habit of using perfume *(HP)* has a positive influence on the purchase decision of perfumes *(PP)*.

The relationships between purchase characteristics and habit of using perfumes resulted in the hypothesis:

- **H3 :** The purchase characteristics, namely store image *(SI)*, message framing *(MF)*, perceived quality *(PQ)*,



scheme characteristics *(SC)*, and subjective norms *(SN)* have a positive influence on the habit of using perfumes *(HP)*.

The mediating effects (indirect effects) of habit of using perfumes is tested between purchase characteristics and purchase decisions of perfumes. Thus, the hypothesis to be tested is :

↳ **H4:** The habit of using perfumes *(HP)* mediates the relationship between purchase characteristics and purchase decisions of perfumes *(PP)*.

The moderating role of brand is tested between purchase characteristics and habit of using perfumes. Thus, the hypothesis becomes:

↳ **H5 :** The brand of perfume moderates the relationship between purchase characteristics and habit of using perfumes *(HP)*.

Analysis, Results, and Findings

Out of 164 respondents considered for the study, 62 (37.8%) were men and 102 (62.2%) were women as depicted in the Table 1. Subsequently, in terms of age group, the respondents' in between the 16-25 years age group formed the majority age group as it accounted for 89 (54.3%) respondents, which aligns with the fact that youngsters are more prone to the usage of perfumes. It is followed by the age group between 26-35 years (61 respondents) (37.2% of the total respondents). About 12 respondents (7.3 % of the total respondents) were in the age group of 36-45 years, and only two respondents (1.2%) were more than 45 years old. The Malays and Chinese comprised the majority of those who responded in this survey and they have equally dominated with 61 (37.2%) respondents each. Meanwhile, Indian respondents were the least with 19 (11.6%) respondents.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents (*n* = 164)

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Male	62	37.8
Gender	Female	102	62.2
	16-25 years	89	54.3
	26-35 years	61	37.2
Age	36-45 years	12	7.3
	> 45 years	2	1.2
Race	Malay	61	37.2
	Chinese	61	37.2
	Indian	19	11.6
	Others	23	14
Education	Schooling	7	4.3
	Diploma	18	11
	UG	88	53.7
	PG	42	25.6
	PHD	8	4.9
	Others	1	0.6
	<US$ 518	51	31.1
Family Income	US$ 518- US$1036	50	30.5
	US$ 1037- US$1554	34	20.7
	US$1555-US$2072	17	10.4
	US$2073-US$2590	6	3.7
	>US$2590	6	3.7
Brand	Non-Branded	83	50.6
	Branded	81	49.4

The educational level of the study sample shows that the undergraduates were the majority in the sample with the highest percentage of 88 (53.7%) respondents. They were 42 (25.6%) respondents who had post-graduate degrees. The family income was included in the socio-demographic profile. Based on the results, the majority of the respondents were in the less than US$518 income category (51/164) followed by 50 (30.5%) respondents, who had a family income of US$518-US$1036. Six respondents were in the category of US$2073-US$2590, while another six respondents were in the category of more than US$2590. The number of respondents who preferred to purchase non-branded perfumes was 83 (50.6%), which is slightly more compared to those who used branded perfumes.

This study applies partial least squares (PLS) using Smart PLS M3 Version 2.0 (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). The main loadings for all the question items (indicators) explained are more than 0.5 for all the latent variables (model variables present in the framework). The minimum value of main loading is 0.580, and the maximum value is 0.827. The average variance extracted (AVE) value needs to be at least 0.5. It is found that all the AVE values are greater than 0.5, which shows that the convergent validity is fully confirmed. Meanwhile, the composite reliability values are shown to be larger than 0.7, which indicates the high levels of internal reliability among latent variables. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value for direct effect of purchasing characteristics (*MF, PQ, SC, SI, SN*) on purchase decision on perfumes *(PP)* shows a value of 0.253, which is a moderate fit according to Hair, Ringle, and

Table 2. Discriminant Validity for Model 1 - *IV* on *DV* (*n*=164)

	MF	*PP*	*PQ*	*SC*	*SI*	*SN*
MF	**0.708**					
PP	0.351	**0.789**				
PQ	0.205	0.355	**0.757**			
SC	0.372	0.381	0.295	**0.722**		
SI	0.399	0.365	0.545	0.426	**0.712**	
SN	0.448	0.228	0.097	0.449	0.362	**0.800**

Figure 2. PLS-Path Analysis of Beta and R^2 Values

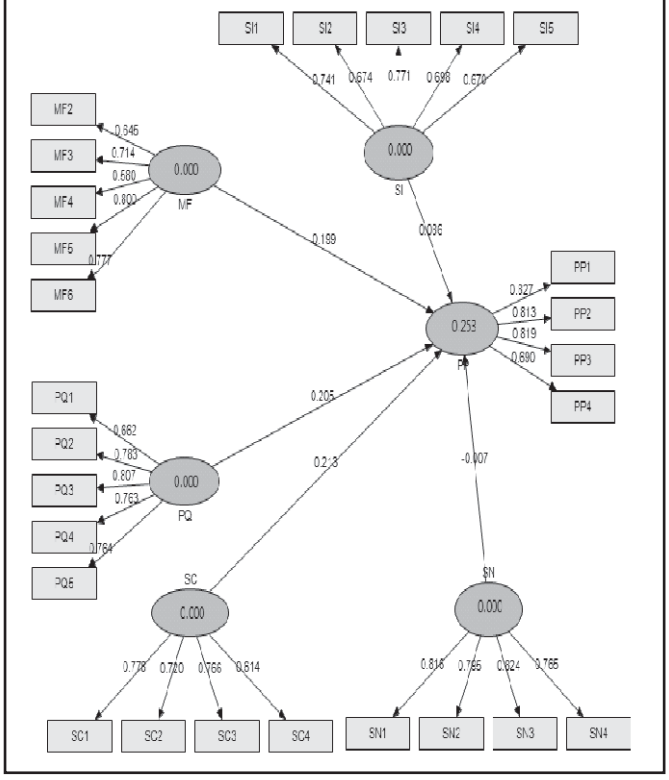
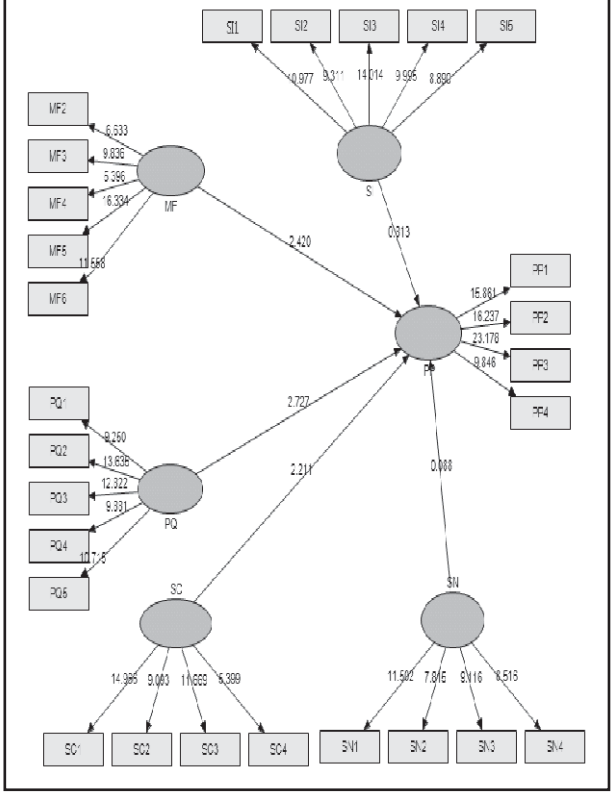


Figure 3: PLS-Path Analysis and *t*-Values



Sarstedt (2011) (see Figure 2). The cross validated (CV) redundancy value (Q^2) is 0.057, and it fulfills the criteria of value above zero. Hence, the fitted PLS model is robust and can be used for predictive inference.

The discriminant validity shows to what extent a specific construct is different from other constructs, the constructs which measure the correlation among dissimilar latent variables and is provided in Table 2. For example, the latent variable *MF's AVE* is found to be 0.501; hence, its square root becomes 0.708. This number is larger than the correlation values in the column of *MF* (0.351, 0.205, and 0.372). Similarly, the observation was carried out for other latent variables (*PQ, SC, SI, SN, and PP*) and the result clearly indicates that discriminant validity was well established for Model 1 (direct effects). The assessment of the structural equation model (SEM) results was addressed to test hypotheses constructed corresponding to the conceptual framework of this research. The structural model consists of path coefficients and explained variances. Bootstrapping is a procedure where a large number of sub samples (5000) were taken from the original sample with replacement to give bootstrap

Table 3. Results of Direct Effects, *t*-Value, and Beta Coefficients - Model 1 (*n* = 164)

Path	Beta-value	Standard Error	*t*-value
MF -> PP	**0.1986**	**0.0821**	**2.4199****
PQ -> PP	**0.2052**	**0.0752**	**2.7273****
SC -> PP	**0.213**	**0.0963**	**2.2111****
SI -> PP	0.0855	0.1053	0.8126
SN -> PP	-0.0072	0.0816	0.0885

Note: ***p* <0.01

Table 4. Discriminant Validity for Model 2 - *IV+MV* on *DV* (*n* = 164)

	HP	*MF*	*PP*	*PQ*	*SC*	*SI*	*SN*
HP	**0.818**						
MF	0.299	**0.709**					
PP	0.497	0.316	**0.797**				
PQ	0.219	0.193	0.344	**0.758**			
SC	0.261	0.379	0.350	0.302	**0.721**		
SI	0.276	0.402	0.342	0.538	0.425	**0.710**	
SN	0.222	0.442	0.210	0.103	0.441	0.370	**0.797**

standard errors for sharpening the regression coefficient (beta) values. The standard error values which were obtained through bootstrapping determine whether the coefficient is significant or non significant. In this study, one-tailed *t*-test with a significance level of $p < 0.05$, $t > 1.65$, and $p < 0.01$, $t > 2.33$ were used. Figure 3 and Table 3 show that the paths *MF -> PP*, *PQ -> PP*, and *SC -> PP* are statistically and positively significant. On the contrary, the paths *SI -> PP* and *SN -> PP* are found to be insignificant. Thus, out of five sub-hypotheses in H1, three are supported and two are rejected.

For Model 2, with habit of using perfume *(HP)* as a mediating variable, all the main loadings obtained are more than 0.5. Hence, it fulfills Hair et al.'s (2010) threshold value. In this model, the minimum main loading is 0.579 *(PP4)* and the maximum is 0.874 *(PP1)*. The AVE measures the explainable variation of the latent variable and is above 0.503 for all the variables. The composite reliability *(CR)* is measured as an alternative to Cronbach's alpha *(CA)*, and the minimum requirement for *CR* is 0.7 according to Hair et al. (2010). In the present study, the composite reliability values are between 0.811 and 0.924. Thus, all the variables have been measured with internal consistency and satisfied the minimum cut off value of 0.7. The coefficient of determination for the mediating effect of *HP* on the relationship between independent variables (*SI, SC, PQ, MF, and SN*) and the dependent variable *(PP)* is 0.345. The change in R^2 is 9.2% from Model 1 to Model 2, and the increase in R^2 reflects that the mediator plays a good role as a pure estimator to study the relationship between *IV's* on *DV*. Meanwhile, the cross-validated redundancy shows a value of 0.050 and 0.149 for *HP* and *PP*, respectively, therefore, fulfilling the thumb rule.

It is clearly shown in Table 4 that all the items of the variables correlate in their own construct rather than on other constructs, thereby establishing the discriminant validity. For example, the variable *HP* has a value of 0.818 resulting from square root of the *AVE* value of 0.669. This number is larger than the correlation values in the column of *HP* with the highest value, which is only 0.497 *(PP)*. The statistical findings using the algorithm and bootstrap sample estimates are shown in the Figure 4, with the standardized beta coefficients and R^2 value for the study sample of 164 respondents. Figure 4, Figure 5, and Table 5 show the direct and indirect relationship among independent variables on dependent variable through the mediating variable. The mediating variable, habit of

Table 5. Results of Direct Effects, *t*-Value, and Beta Coefficients - Model 2 (*n*=164)

Path	Beta-value	Standard Error	*t*-value
HP -> PP	**0.381**	**0.096**	**3.992****
MF -> HP	**0.182**	**0.098**	**1.862***
MF -> PP	0.103	0.081	1.274
PQ -> HP	**0.102**	**0.101**	**1.013**
PQ -> PP	**0.173**	**0.081**	**2.140***
SC -> HP	0.101	0.114	0.887
SC -> PP	0.148	0.096	1.547
SI -> HP	0.085	0.120	0.706
SI -> PP	0.047	0.106	0.439
SN -> HP	0.056	0.112	0.497
SN -> PP	-0.021	0.087	0.236

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

using perfume *(HP)*, has a positive influence on purchase decision of perfumes *(PP)* ($\beta = 0.381$; $t = 3.992$, $p < 0.01$), and therefore, H2 is supported.

Out of five independent variables (store image, scheme characteristics, message framing, perceived quality, and subjective norms), only message framing *(MF)* is positively and significantly influencing *HP* (Only one out of five sub-hypotheses of H3 are supported). On the other hand, perceived quality *(PQ)* is positively and significantly influencing the purchase decision of perfumes *(PP)*. It clearly indicates that the quality matters a lot when the consumer purchases perfumes. On the contrary, scheme characteristics *(SC)* and store image *(SI)*, which are significant on the purchase decision of perfume *(PP)* have no effect on *PP* when the mediator *HP* is introduced.

Figure 4. PLS-Path Analysis of Beta and R^2 values

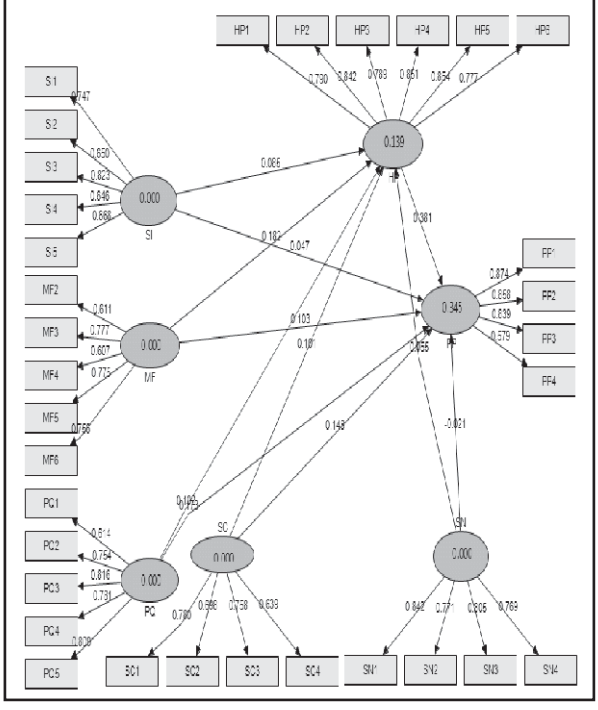


Figure 5. PLS-Path Analysis and *t*-Values

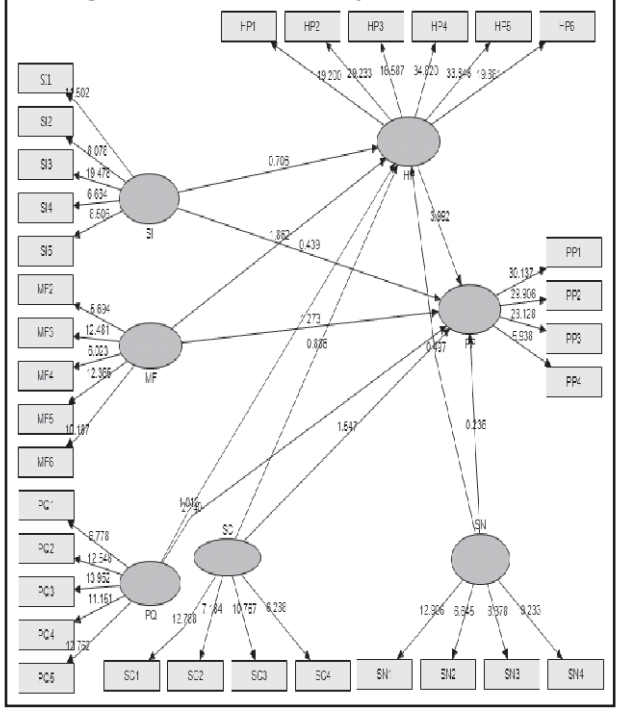
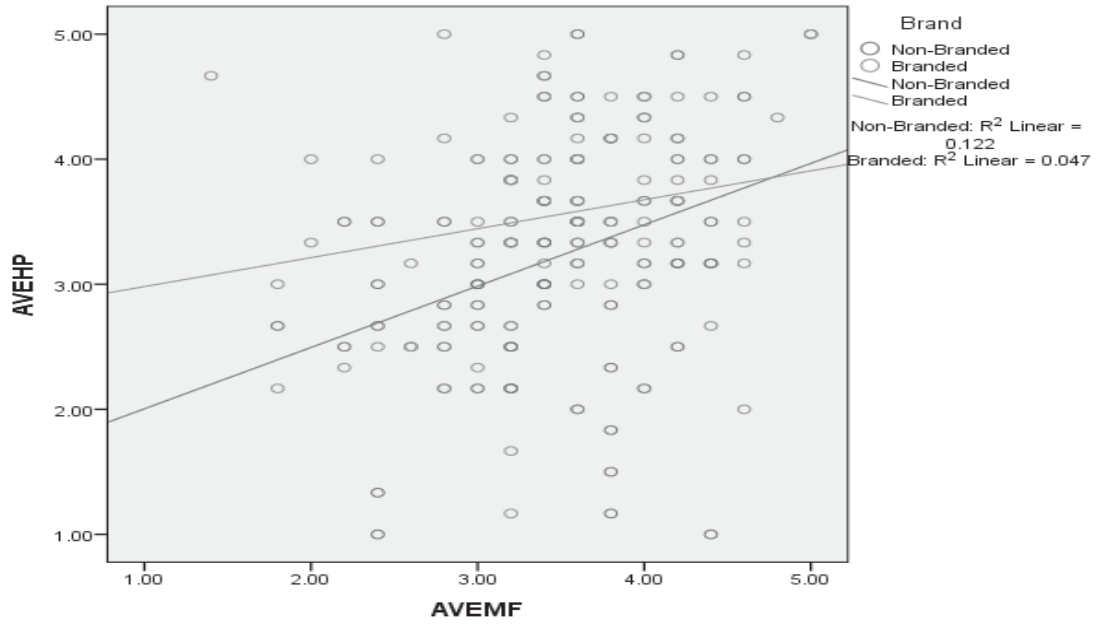


Table 6. Results of Indirect Effects, *t*-Value, and Beta Coefficients - Model 2 (*n*=164)

Path	Beta-value	Standard Error	*t*-value
SI->HP->PP	0.032	0.050	0.640
MF->HP->PP	**0.069**	**0.043**	**1.655***
PQ->HP->PP	**0.066**	**0.040**	**1.650***
SC->HP->PP	0.039	0.050	0.780
SN->HP->PP	0.038	0.045	0.844

Note: *p<0.05

Figure 6. Brand Moderates the Relationship Between Message Framing *(MF)* and Habit *(HP)*



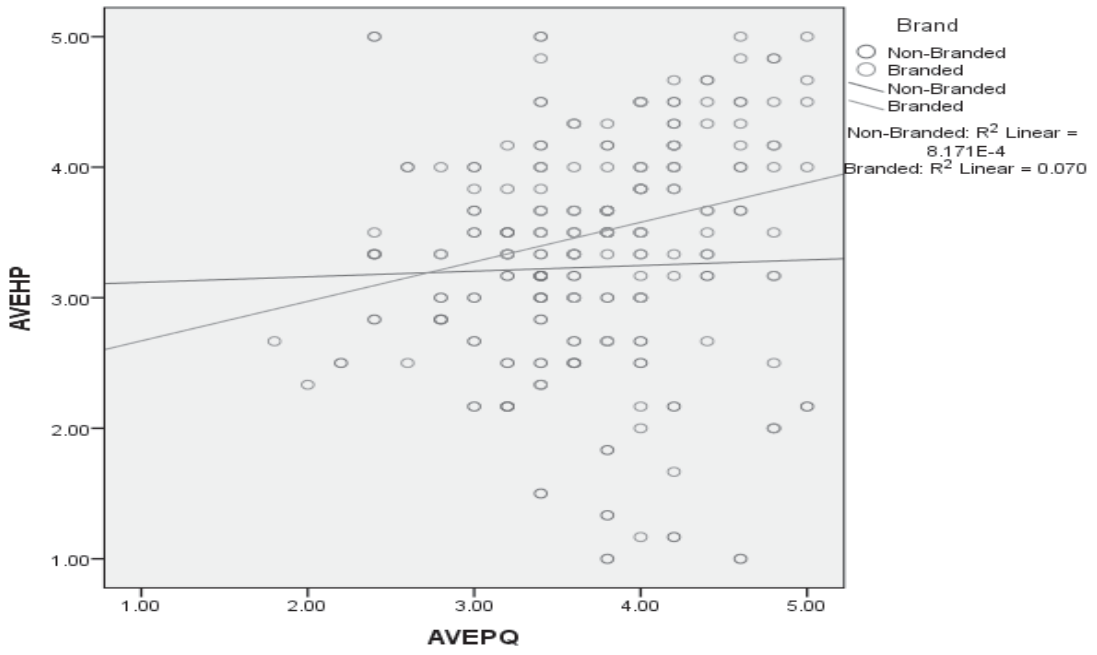
Thus, the habit of using perfume *(HP)* is on priority for the consumers rather than *SC* and *SI* to make a purchase decision regarding perfumes.

The significance of the indirect path (mediating effect) in the PLS structural model was carried out through bootstrapping 5000 samples, and the estimates were computed with path analysis. The Table 6 shows the path coefficients and *t*-values for indirect effects of Model 2. It shows that *MF->HP->PP* ($\beta = 0.069$; $t = 1.655$, $p < 0.05$) and *PQ->HP->PP* ($\beta = 0.066$; $t = 1.650$, $p < 0.05$) paths are significant (only two out of five sub-hypotheses of H4 is supported). Hence, the habit of using perfumes *(HP)* mediates the relationship between message framing *(MF)* and perceived quality *(PQ)* on purchase decision on perfumes *(PP)* in the positive direction. Thus, the variables : message framing and perceived quality really matter when the consumers make a decision regarding the purchase of perfumes.

↳ **Moderating Effect of Brand of Perfume :** In order to test the effect of brand (moderating effect), interaction graphs are performed for each *IV*'s on *MV*. The Figure 6 and Figure 7 display that the brand has a moderating effect for message framing *(MF)* and perceived quality *(PQ)* towards habit of using perfumes *(HP)*. Thus, only two out of five sub-hypotheses of H5 were supported.

The interaction graph in Figure 6 shows that the brand has a moderating effect on the relationship between

Figure 7. Brand Moderates the Relationship Between Perceived Quality *(PQ)* and Habit *(HP)*



message framing *(MF)* and habit of using perfumes *(HP)*. When the average message framing *(MF)* score goes up, the respondents remarked that they might even change their habit and switch over from branded perfumes to non-branded perfumes. It is due to the fact that in the cosmetics market, consumers pay more attention to the attractive labels rather than the brand. However, when the message framing score is low, consumers give preferences for branded perfumes rather than non-branded perfumes.

The interaction graph in Figure 7 shows that the brand has a moderating effect on the relationship between perceived quality *(PQ)* and habit of using perfumes *(HP)*. When the average perceived quality *(PQ)* score goes up, the respondents prefer to use branded perfumes rather than non-branded perfumes. Hence, the respondents were of the opinion that if the branded perfumes maintained high perceived quality, they gave high priority to it. Meanwhile, when the perceived quality was low, consumers gave preference to non-branded perfumes rather than branded perfumes.

Managerial Implications

The present study has important implications for the manufacturers and retailers of perfumes to formulate proper marketing strategies to nurture the market since significant findings and results of the study were obtained from the consumers' feedback. Furthermore, the study is important for the marketers to understand the consumers' purchasing behavior on perfumes, and also to understand the market segmentation, which is more competitive, and utilize the target market wisely. The study highlights that the manufactures should focus more on message framing and quality of the perfume irrespective of the brand image. In addition, this study gives more implications to the marketing managers, manufacturers, and retailers of the perfume industry to manage their marketability, manufacturing capacity, and the packaging of the branded and non-branded perfumes, which have a positive impact on the purchase decisions of Malaysian consumers.

Conclusion

The hot weather temperature conditions in Malaysia cause an unpleasant body odour, and Malaysians are of the opinion that perfume usage enhances self confidence in their day-to-day lifestyle. Although Malaysians give importance to self-grooming (public appearance), there is less market penetration in Asia, particularly in Malaysia, for manufacturing perfumes.

Based on the present primary survey results, to increase the marketability of perfume products, the manufacturers should give more importance to the message framing, perfume quality, and also the scheme characteristics to attract consumers. Interestingly, the study results reveal that there is no difference between genders in the usage of perfumes. In addition, Malays and Chinese, the two major races in Malaysia prefer perfumes in the same ratio, which was evinced from the findings of the present study. Majority of the Malaysian consumers consider choosing a perfume with quality and give priority to branded perfumes. The habit of using perfume mediates the relationship between message framing and purchase decision of perfumes. In the prevailing market conditions, consumers expect high quality of any perfume but with less price, but it also matters on the attractive labeling of the perfume products. Besides, the consumers give high importance to the quality of the perfume, irrespective of the brand. The periodical variation in perfume flavors is highly important to cater to the different choices and preferences of the consumers. The packaging of perfumes plays a vital role in the consumers' preference and attraction and there is no discrimination between branded and non-branded perfumes as long as the quality is maintained. Furthermore, according to the respondents, the celebrity who represents the branded or non-branded perfumes needs to be more recognized and popular to attract the target consumers.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The present study focuses on individual usage of perfumes and has not concentrated on the application of perfumes in offices and market places for better ambience. Apart from this, perfumes (scents) are also used in the aromatherapy area, where these are used to stimulate a relaxed environment for relaxation purposes, which is not in the scope of the current study. Since, Malaysia is multiracial with Malays, Chinese, and Indian populations, the study has restricted applications to the non-Asian regions.

The variable product category is not included in the proposed conceptual framework of the present study. The inclusion of this predictor may further improve the explainable variation R^2. The local perfumes manufactured in Malaysia and foreign perfumes may be compared to know the purchase decisions of perfumes among the Malaysian consumers. The experimental design approach on the purchase decision of perfumes may be considered in the future by providing different samples of perfumes to the consumers and simultaneously, primary data collection from the respondents can also be done.

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