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## **Consumers' Buying Behaviour on Malaysian Traditional Handicrafts**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to investigate the factors that influence consumers' buying behaviour towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft with the support of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The variables considered in this study are consumers' knowledge, subjective norms, perceived behavioural of control and product characteristics. Self-administered online survey questionnaires were distributed and collected from 233 respondents. Consumers' knowledge, subjective norms and product characteristics have strong direct and positive effect on the purchase intention of Malaysia's traditional handicraft. However, perceived behavioural of control was found to be not significant. The findings of the current study may assist the organizations and business owners as well as marketers to better understand the Malaysia's traditional handicraft and hopes to devise business strategies to encourage purchases among the local and foreign consumers. The outcome of this study demonstrates the variables that influence Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.

### **Keywords:**

Malaysia Traditional Handicraft, Consumer Behaviour, Theory of Planned Behaviour

## Introduction

Handicraft which refers to hand craft that are handmade products and having artistic and cultural attraction based on their material, design and workmanship (Fabeil, N.F.; Pazim, K.H.; Marzuki, K.M.; Langgat, J., 2014). Craft refers to something that is unique to show a tradition, heritage and culture of a country to the world. Each handicraft represents each country or states therefore, it is a symbol to remind buyer experience (Kim and Littrell, 2001; Revilla and Godd, 2003). In short, craft products reflect local wisdom and identity (Viboon, 2010). The craft products should include various raw materials and at least eighty percent (80%) were made by hands. Handicrafts represent the cultural and heritage of a state or a nation and having their own definition depending on historical development to represent the traditions, emotions of a person or group of people and aesthetics (Littrell, 1990; Fairhurst, A., C. Costello, and A. F. Holmes., 2007). However, products are becoming more and more commoditized with increased globalisation, and artisans find their products competing with goods from all over the world (Yassir and Khalid, 2015). Therefore, in the Malaysian context, Jabatan Warisan Negara carried out many efforts to protect handicrafts in Malaysia and these efforts are under the purview of Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture. Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation was set up in order to stimulate the small-scale production in handicraft industry to sustain in the market (Salfarina, Haris, Daniel and Anita, 2019). Some of the common traditional handicrafts in Malaysia are batik, metal craft, wood craft, fabric woven, ceramic craft and rattan.

In the global economy, tourism industry is important in boosting a nation's economy. According to The Star (2007), Malaysia's traditional handicraft products were found to be stigmatized and deemed not good enough for the foreign market for a long period of time. Therefore, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture started to take action to find ways to solve the problems. Starting from Year 2014, a Malaysian handicraft store was launched and named 'Karyaneka' which is the very first online platform and mobile application that allow customers to purchase Malaysia's traditional handicraft from around the world (Tourism Malaysia, 2014). These handicraft store brought good news to the Malaysian economy, where sales of handicrafts in year 2014 has increased by 100% as compared to the previous year (The Star, 2015). However, starting from year 2015, sales of the handicraft store started to decline, and the stock of slow-moving handicrafts became unsold products and caused losses amounted to RM 125,807 (The Star, 2017). Nevertheless, the sales of handicraft had been increasing steadily from year 2017 (Malay Mail, 2017). In that year, the Craft Festival organized generated a total sales volume of RM 465 million (New Strait Times, 2018) and a total sales of RM 506.5 million had been generated in the year 2018, which included RM 42 million of sales generated by the entrepreneurs (Malay Mail, 2019).

There are three craft complexes in Malaysia which are located at Kuala Lumpur, Langkawi and Johor. According to Figure 1 below, the total number of local visitors and foreign visitors declined in year 2016 but picked up in year 2017 due to efforts put in place to generate sales of traditional handicrafts. In year 2018, the total number of foreign visitors started to decline due to lack of funding by government allocation for Malaysia's tourism promotion programmes (The Edge, 2019). In response to this, Karyaneka opened more stores in airport in order to attract at airport to shop for these traditional handicrafts while on a transit flight (Bernama, 2018).



Source: *Financial Budget Malaysia*

**Figure 1: Malaysian Traditional Handicraft Revenue (RM million)**

As the market of Malaysia's traditional handicraft fluctuated from year to year, the hand crafter will have a risk of unsold products (The Star, 2017). Therefore, the sustainability of the traditional handcrafters in the market is questionable. According to the Malaysian Budget, the portion allocated to the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture had increased from RM100 million in year 2019 to RM1.1 billion in year 2020. The reason for this significant increase is due to the year-long event named 'Visit Malaysia 2020 (VMY2020)' targeting 30 million tourists. This is predicted to contribute RM 100 billion to the Malaysian economy. Out of the RM1.1 billion budget, RM90 million is allocated to drive awareness, promotions, and programmes. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, Malaysia have been locked down for several months. Therefore, the VMY2020 event will have to be postponed in view of this pandemic. Nevertheless, the preparation has started since 2019 and had incurred preparation cost.

With the understanding of the background on the traditional handicraft industry, this study would like to find the factors that influence local and foreign consumers in making purchase decisions. The findings could provide potential ways or suggestions for the traditional handcrafters' to make improvements and to improve buying experience to the potential consumers.

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of consumer's knowledge, subjective norms, perceived behavioural of control, product characteristics and purchase intention (buying behaviour) towards Malaysia's traditional handicrafts.

- To study the relationship between consumer knowledge towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.
- To study the relationship between subjective norms towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.
- To study the relationship between perceived behavioural of control towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.
- To study the relationship between product characteristics towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.

## Literature Review

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985) served as underpinning theoretical framework for proposing the relationships between the variables towards purchasing intentions of Malaysian traditional handicraft. The variables in this study: consumer knowledge, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and product characteristic.

Purchase intentions referred to a kind of decision making that identifies the reason to purchase a certain brand by consumers. Intention refers to the plan to acquire or use products as stated by Mullen & Johnson (1990) in the context of consumer behaviour. According to Ajzen (1991), that intention is the factor that inspire consumers and in turn influences their behaviour. To a larger extent, it declares how tough consumers are willing to try, as well as the amount of effort they are willing to utilize for achieving a respective behaviour. Intention has been used as an alternative to measure purchase behaviour as it provides a link among consumers' receptions to products and their procurement or use of the products. When consumer tends to purchase a product in certain condition it is also defined as purchase intention. Purchase intention is an effective tool to forecast buying process although customer purchase decision is a complicated process. Purchase intentions may be changed due to subjective norms, perceived behavioural of control, product characteristics and consumer knowledge.

According to Kim and Damhorst (1998), consumers who have more knowledge tend to show more concern than those who have less knowledge and the increased the level of concern leads consumers to consider attributes of products when making purchase choices. Researchers have also found that individuals with less knowledge dislike to perceive their efforts to solve problems lesser than those who with more knowledge (Ellen, Wiener, & Cobb-Walgren, 1991). Therefore, if consumer with more knowledge about a certain product, the probability of purchase towards will be higher as compare to the consumer with less knowledge as this will lead to low probability to purchase.

According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), subjective norms consists of a person's perception of what critical referent individuals or groups think that he or she should do. In other words, subjective norms referred to the influence of others in the performance behaviour of an individual. The individuals may be influenced by important people in their life, family members, colleagues, relatives and friends. Researchers found that in subjective norms, state-oriented people are more strongly influenced by intentions than action-oriented people (Bagozzi, Baumgatner and Yi, 1992). Bagozzi et al. (1992) stated that "State-oriented is referring to people with low-regulatory capacity and action-oriented are referring to people with high-regulatory capacity". To put it another way, "action orientation indicates a willingness to act; state orientation reflects "inertia to act"". The researchers further describe that strong cognitive elements that were based on the perceived expectations of significant others are contained in subjective norms. People with a high state orientation might have a greater tendency to recognize and comply with the aspirations of significant others. A direct relationship has been found by Kim and Karpova (2010) related to subjective norms and purchase intention when clarifying attitudes towards buying counterfeit fashion goods amongst US college students. Researchers have established that there was a positive relationship between subjective norms and purchase intentions (Fish-

bein and Ajzen, 1975; Kim and Karpova, 2010).

According to Ajzen (1991), perceived behavioural of control (PBC) is the extension of consumer's perception of the availability of resources and opportunities. Furthermore, it measures that volitional control of a person over an actual behaviour based on interest and assumed to reflect past experience as well as predictable barrier and difficulty. PBC helps to predict those behaviour expected to be performed by individuals but are unable to carry out due to the fact that they lack chances or resources such as ability, money, skills and time. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), an individual having more opportunity or resources, the better will be the individual's control over the behaviour or perceived behavioural of control. Perceived behavioural of control has been verified that it is the essential determinant when Ling (2009) is looking for illustrate in the research of luxury purchase intention amongst Chinese consumers. Numerous studies have proven that there is significant relationship between perceived behavioural of control and intention (Lee and Ho, 2002; Teo and Pok, 2003; Shih and Fang, 2004).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) have explained that expectations linked with behavioural consequences can be defined as attitudes towards that behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Product characteristics such as colour, size and packaging are main attributes that relate to consumers' shopping satisfaction. These attributes providing visual referrer which are essential primitivism schema (Turner and Reisinger, 2011). Therefore, consumer beliefs may show an overall positive feeling (attitude) in consumer mind (Hansen et. al., 2004). Handicraft that look more genuine, having culture motifs/ pattern and present local culture will be more exciting for the consumers. Ultimately, consumers will form positive behaviour (purchase handicraft) that are influenced by the positive feeling (attitude). Researchers have established that there is a positive relationship between product characteristics and purchase intentions (Ha & Lennon, 2006; Prendergast et al., 2002).

There are 4 determinants used in this study which are subjective norms, perceived behavioural of control, product characteristics and consumer knowledge.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between consumer knowledge towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant relationship between consumer knowledge towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between subject norms towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is significant relationship between subject norms towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between perceived behavioural control towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.

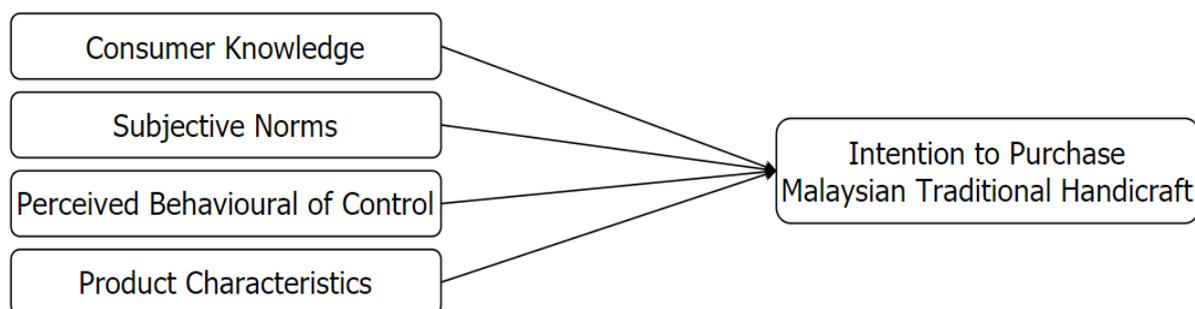
H<sub>3</sub>: There is significant relationship between perceived behavioural control towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between product characteristics towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.

H<sub>4</sub>: There is significant relationship between product characteristics towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intentions.

## Research Methods

Figure 2 illustrates the proposed conceptual framework that showed the network of relationship among the independent variables and dependent variable. Based on the framework, there are four independent variables which are the consumer knowledge, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control and product characteristics. The dependent variable in this study is the consumers' purchase intention towards Malaysia's traditional handicrafts. A self-administered, web-based questionnaire was developed in this study to collect the data. Any individual respondents who are of the age of majority could be a respondent to fill the questionnaire as convenience sampling is being employed. Pre-test was conducted involving five (5) academics and friends. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents via online platforms through QR code and URL link as there was locked down during the data collection period. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, WeChat and Email were used to distribute the questionnaire. A total number of 233 responses were collected and 231 of them are valid.



**Figure 2: Proposed Conceptual Framework**

The questionnaire consists of four main sections. Firstly, Section A asks if the respondent is Malaysian or Non-Malaysian. For Malaysian, their origin states/federal territories and ethnicity are requested and for Non-Malaysian, the question will ask the respondent's country of origin. Section B consists of five demographic questions on basic information of respondents. The requested information is with regards to respondent's age, gender, highest education attainment, occupation and monthly income. Thirdly, Section C comprised of nine questions on opinions on Malaysian traditional handicrafts. The last section, which is Section D, involved twenty questions on factors that will influence the respondents' buying behaviour towards Malaysia's handicraft. This is divided into five parts which are purchase intention, subjective norm, perceived behavioural of control, product characteristics and consumer knowledge. The questionnaire was translated into three languages, i.e. English, Malay and Chinese for ease of questionnaire collection from respondents from all around the world. Questions measured with the scale anchored from one (1) strongly disagree to five (5) strongly agree.

## Results and Discussion

A total number of 233 respondents were collected. The total usable sample for this study was 231 responses. There were two samples that were excluded due to does not meet the requirement as the respondents did not fill up all the questions.

Descriptive statistics showed the demographic profile of respondents (Table 1). The demographic questions sought after were nationality, gender and age.

**Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile**

Demographic Profile	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Nationality	Malaysian	151	65.37%
	Non-Malaysian	80	34.63%
Gender	Female	131	56.71%
	Male	100	43.29%
Age (years old)	<19	33	14.29%
	20 - 29	62	26.84%
	30 - 39	43	18.61%
	40 - 49	47	20.35%
	50 - 59	27	11.69%
	>60	19	8.23%

Table 2 highlighted the respondents' ranking for the most familiar Malaysia's traditional handicraft. It was discovered that Batik was the most familiar among Malaysian respondents which is 32%. However, Non-Malaysian respondents were more familiar with wood (35%). Besides, Malaysian respondents were also familiar with other traditional handicraft of Malaysia such as Rattan (23%), Wood (17%), Woven (11%), Metal (11%) and Ceramic (6%). Furthermore, the study found that Non-Malaysian respondents were more familiar towards Metal (19%), Batik (18%), Rattan (16%), Ceramic (8%) and Woven (5%) products.

**Table 2: Ranking for Most Familiar Malaysia's Traditional Handicraft**

Ranking	Malaysian		Non-Malaysian	
	Product	Percentage	Product	Percentage
1	Batik	32%	Wood	35%
2	Rattan	23%	Metal	19%
3	Wood	17%	Batik	18%
4	Woven	11%	Rattan	16%
5	Metal	11%	Ceramic	8%
6	Ceramic	6%	Woven	5%

Table 3 illustrated the participants' awareness towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft. The majority of those who responded are "Not Sure" on the effort by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) in promoting Malaysia's traditional handicraft. Only 37.66% of the respondents aware ("Yes") on the efforts. Nevertheless, 3.46% of respondents for this question was "No".

**Table 3: Responses (%) of Participants' Awareness towards Malaysia's Traditional Handicraft**

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	87	37.66%
No	8	3.46%
Not Sure	136	58.87%

As shown in Table 4, the respondent's interest towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft was high. Over half of those respondents felt that they are interested in Malaysia's traditional handicraft.

**Table 4: Responses (%) of Participants' Interested towards Malaysia's Traditional Handicraft**

	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely Interested	67	29.00%
Interested	60	25.97%
Neutral	76	32.90%
Not Interested	23	9.96%
Extremely Not Interested	5	2.16%

The purchase experience of Malaysian and Non-Malaysian respondents towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft were positive. A majority of participants (74.89%) indicated that they had purchased the traditional handicrafts before. It can be seen from data in Table 5 that most of the respondents purchased from the tourist attraction spots (78%). This is followed by retail outlet (68%), craft complex (28%), official website (14%), e-commerce platform (12%) and social media (10%). Of the 58 respondents who did not purchase the handicrafts made in Malaysia, the reason of not purchasing were due to do not know where to buy (59%), did not see it before (45%), not interested (13%), unreasonable price (10%) and product is not beautiful (2%).

**Table 5: Responses (%) of Participants' Buying Experience, Place to Purchase and Reason Do Not Purchase**

	Detail	Frequency	Percentage
Consumer Buying Experience	Yes	173	74.89%
	No	58	25.11%
Place to Purchase	Tourist Attraction Spot	135	78.00%
	Retail Outlet	117	68.00%
	Craft Complex	49	28.00%
	Official Website	24	14.00%
	E-commerce Platform	21	12.00%
	Social Media	17	10.00%
Reason Do Not Purchase	Do not know where to buy.	34	59.00%
	Did not see it before.	26	45.00%
	Not Interested.	13	22.00%
	The price is unreasonable	6	10.00%
	Product is not beautiful.	1	2.00%

The Table 6 below highlighted the factors that the respondent will consider when they want to purchase the Malaysia's traditional handicraft in future. The results showed that 148 respondents (64%) will consider buying the traditional handicraft if it was beautiful. Others will consider to buy if they found the products are unique (60%), felt interested to purchase (60%), affordable price (50%), as gift for friends and family (43%), in favour of the products (42%) and has collectable value (23%).

**Table 6: Reasons to Consider When Purchasing Traditional Handicrafts**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
It is beautiful.	148	64%
It is unique.	139	60%
I am interested to buy.	139	60%
Price is affordable.	115	50%
As a gift for friend and family.	99	43%
I like it.	98	42%
It has collection value.	52	23%

In Table 7, the results showed the interest of participants in joining activities which are related to traditional handicraft such as Batik Painting (74.46%) and Crafting Pewter (64.07%). Surprisingly, only a minority of respondents (5.63%) revealed that they will not consider joining any of the two activities given in the questionnaire.

**Table 7: Traditional Handicraft Activities to Consider Joining**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Batik Painting	172	74.46%
Crafting Pewter	148	64.07%
None of the Activities	13	5.63%

Table 8 showed the reliability analysis of this study. The Cronbach's Alpha of each independent variable displayed strong association, i.e. consumer knowledge is 0.956, subjective norms is 0.960, perceived behavioural control is 0.87 and product characteristics is 0.946. As the Cronbach's Alpha on purchase intention towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft exceeded 0.7, this meant good strength in the intensity of association.

**Table 8: Reliability Analysis**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
Consumer's Knowledge	0.956	4
Subjective Norms	0.960	4
Perceived Behavioural of Control	0.870	4
Product Characteristic	0.946	4
Purchase Intention towards Malaysia's Traditional Handicraft	0.960	4

The summary of the regression output is represented in Table 9. Adjusted R-Square value of 0.703 indicated that 70.3% of the variations on purchase intentions towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft could be explained by consumer knowledge, subjective norms, perceived behavioural of control and product characteristics.

**Table 9: Multiple Regression Analysis**

<b>Multiple Regression Analysis</b>	
Multiple R	0.841
R-Squared	0.708
Adjusted R-Square	0.703
Standard Error	0.496
Observations	231

Table 10 below represents the coefficient results of the regressions analysis. It showed that all the independent variables except "Perceived Behavioural of Control" are significantly related to the dependent variable. First, "Consumer Knowledge" and "Subjective Norms" with both p-value equal to 0.000 resulted as significant predictor of purchase intention towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft. Thus, hypothesis 1 and 2 are supported. However, "Perceived Behavioural of Control" was found to be not statistically significant (with p-value > 0.05). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was not supported. Lastly, "product characteristics" was found to be a significant predictor (p-value = 0.000) of purchase intention towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is supported. Besides, "Subjective Norms" in the table of coefficient (beta) stated that it was the strongest predictor of the dependent variables ( $\beta = 0.645$ ). This is in line with the past studies of Kang, Liu & Kim (2013), which also stated that "Subjective Norms" had strongest positive impact on an individual's intention to purchase.

$$PI = (-0.046) + 0.133CK + 0.645SN + 0.037PBC + 0.386C$$

where:

PI = Purchase Intention towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft

CK = Consumer Knowledge

SN = Subjective Norms

PBC = Perceived Behavioural of Control

C = Product Characteristic

**Table 10: Coefficients**

	<b>Coefficients</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
Intercept	-0.046	0.103	0.657
Consumer Knowledge	0.133	0.036	0.000
Subjective Norms	0.645	0.054	0.000
Perceived Behavioural of Control	0.037	0.081	0.652
Product Characteristics	0.386	0.070	0.000

## Conclusions

The overall summary of findings for this study are presented in Table 11.

**Table 11: Summary of findings**

Hypothesis	Significant Level	Findings
H1: There is significant relationship between consumer knowledge towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intention.	Sig= P<0.05	Supported
H2: There is significant relationship between subject norms towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intention.	Sig= P<0.05	Supported
H3: There is significant relationship between perceived behavioural control towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intention.	Sig= P>0.05	Not Supported
H4: There is significant relationship between product characteristics towards Malaysia's traditional handicraft purchase intention.	Sig= P<0.05	Supported

From the table above, consumer knowledge, subjective norms and product characteristics were found to have a direct and positive influence on the buying intent of Malaysian traditional handicrafts. Perceived behavioural of control was not significant as this study had shown that it is not a relevant variable to influence the respondents' intention to purchase Malaysian traditional handicraft.

Several implications in this study. Firstly, marketers should create more awareness, knowledge, and convenience on Malaysia's traditional handicraft in more marketplaces and platforms to capture a wider market. Practitioner and hand crafter should create more unique and variety of designs which will attract more buyers.

It is not without limits, like most study. The data collected used cross-sectional study which only represent the current situation and does not represent the similar outcomes in the future. As the data were collected using convenience sampling, it restricts the generalizability of the findings to the broader population. Thus, this creates an opportunity to expand to wider geographical locations for future studies.

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