

ASSESSING CRITICAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE INTENTIONS BEHIND THE PURCHASE BEHAVIOR OF BOTTLED DRINKING WATER

Prabaharan. T

Department of Management, Faculty of Commerce and Management, Eastern University, Sri Lanka

p_thambirajah@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

Water plays a pivotal role in human life, serving not only as a vital beverage but also for various essential activities such as bathing, cooking, washing, and more. Individuals acquire their drinking water from diverse sources, including wells, tanks, tap lines, fountains, and bottled sources. The emphasis on the quality of drinking water becomes crucial, particularly due to the essential minerals it provides for human well-being. This research is dedicated to "Assessing Key Factors Influencing the Intention to Purchase Bottled Drinking Water," specifically focusing on family heads in the Batticaloa district. Structured questionnaires, employing a five-point Likert scale, were utilized to collect primary data. The study gathered information from 150 family heads in the Batticaloa district, and both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results indicate a positive correlation between key factors—Trust, Health Appearance, Price Perception, Income, Region—and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water in the Batticaloa district. Consequently, the findings suggest a significant and positive relationship between these key factors and the purchasing behavior of bottled drinking water in the specified area.

Key words: trust, health appearance, price perception, income, region, intention purchase and bottled drinking water

Background of the Research

Water stands as a fundamental necessity for humanity, with no individual capable of sustaining life without it (Kim, 2004). Beyond its application in agriculture, industries, medical practices, entertainment, and various other uses, the primary function of water remains for consumption (Radder, 2005). The quality of drinking water holds paramount importance, considering its fundamental role as a basic need for the human body. While safe mineral water is ideal for human consumption, the challenge lies in locating such sources due to water pollution and the reckless disposal of water by individuals (Samad, 2004).

In light of these challenges, nations worldwide prioritize the preservation and protection of drinking water, recognizing its pivotal role in fostering sustainable societal development and contributing to the well-being and progress of communities (Tustin & Lockshin, 2001). Currently, a prevalent trend is the widespread adoption of bottled drinking water by a majority of individuals (Samad, 2004). This choice is influenced by various factors, including the perceived quality of drinking water, public trust, individual income levels, the cost associated with obtaining safe drinking water, and the geographical location of residence.

The demand for bottled drinking water has witnessed a significant surge in recent times due to these considerations (Samad, 2004). In Sri Lanka, a country situated in a dry zone, reservoirs play a crucial role in meeting the water consumption needs of the population. The Batticaloa district, characterized by its arid climate, faces considerable challenges related to water scarcity, leading to issues such as the spread of kidney diseases linked

to the use of tank water and well water. The residents of Batticaloa predominantly engage in business and farming activities, making access to safe and reliable water a paramount concern for their livelihoods.

Purchase intention represents the likelihood that a consumer will acquire a specific product, stemming from a combination of the customer's perceived need, attitude towards the product, perceptions of it, and the reputation of the company producing the goods or services (Kotler & Keller, 2009). It has been extensively studied in the literature as a reliable predictor of actual purchases. Consumers tend to exhibit higher purchase intentions when familiar factors are involved (Keller, 2001). According to Kotler (2000), this intention serves as a crucial aspect in predicting consumers' purchasing behavior and subjective intentions.

Researchers emphasize the importance of consumers harboring positive sentiments toward a product, asserting that such positive feelings are integral to the formation of purchase intentions (Kotler, 2000). Purchase intention, therefore, serves as a metric measuring the willingness of individuals to buy a particular product and is often quantified as the likelihood that consumers will indeed make a purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2009). This concept reflects a person's decision to engage in a specific buying behavior, with the underlying idea that the decision to act is contingent upon the individual having full control over the behavior (Keller, 2001). This perspective was introduced to capture the notion that a person's commitment to a particular behavior materializes only when they possess complete autonomy in executing that behavior (Kotler, 2000).

It is logical to anticipate that consumers' attitudes towards purchasing bottled drinking water are influenced by their broader attitudes towards the use of such water. There's a proposition that attitudes towards emerging objects of interest are generally weak and, consequently, may not be robust predictors of behavior due to their reliance on indirect experiences with the object (Canavari, 2002). Consumers tend to be inclined towards activities that contribute to their health, and establishments offering such services have ample opportunities to educate their clientele on the potential negative impacts and, therefore, provide adequate facilities to address these concerns (Hetherington, 1992). This approach significantly influences the perception of their valued customers.

The current study delves into the evaluation of key factors impacting the intention to purchase bottled drinking water, with a specific focus on family heads in the Batticaloa district. The aim is to better understand the factors influencing consumers' decisions and behaviors related to purchasing bottled drinking water, particularly within the context of the Batticaloa district.

Research Problem

People universally prioritize their health and the accessibility of water (Kim, 2004). The quality of drinking water is a critical consideration, given the essential role of mineral water in human life (Samad, 2004). Numerous research studies have explored the factors influencing the intention to purchase bottled drinking water. In the Batticaloa district, the local drinking water is deemed unsuitable, leading residents to rely on bottled alternatives instead of well, tank, or tap water. However, there existing studies not focused on the factors influencing the intention to purchase bottled drinking water specifically in the Batticaloa district.

Several factors play a significant role in influencing the intention to purchase bottled drinking water (Samad, 2004). People's decisions to opt for bottled water are shaped by factors such as trust, income, price of bottled drinking water, health considerations, gender, and regional preferences. Recognizing the importance of these factors, this research was undertaken to evaluate the key elements impacting the intention to purchase bottled drinking water, specifically focusing on family heads in the Batticaloa district. The study aims to provide insights into the factors that drive purchasing behavior in the context of bottled drinking water in this particular community.

Research Questions

1. In what manner has trust impacted the purchasing intentions of bottled drinking water?
2. To what extent has the perceived health appearance influenced the purchasing intentions of bottled drinking water?
3. In what way has the perception of price been influencing the purchasing intentions of bottled drinking water?
4. To what degree has the income of family holders influenced their purchasing intentions of bottled drinking water?
5. In what manner has the region been impacting the purchasing intentions of bottled drinking water?

Research Objectives

1. To identify whether the trust has been affecting intention to purchase bottled drinking water.
2. To identify whether the health appearance has been affecting intention to purchase bottled drinking water.
3. To identify whether the price perception has been affecting intention to purchase bottled drinking water.
4. To identify whether the family holder's income has been affecting intention to purchase bottled drinking water.
5. To identify whether the region has been affecting intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

Review of Literature

Intention to purchase

Consumer behavior encompasses the analysis of individuals, groups, or organizations in their processes of selecting, purchasing, using, and disposing of goods and services to fulfill their needs and desires (Solomon, 2009). This field of study delves not only into observable consumer actions but also explores the underlying reasons driving those behaviors. On a broader scale, marketers seek insights into demographic shifts and societal values, beliefs, and practices that shape consumers' interactions with the marketplace (Kotler & Keller, 2009). On a more focused level, consumer behavior zeroes in on individual human behavior and the motivations behind these actions (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Consequently, the literature on consumer behavior heavily draws from concepts rooted in psychology and sociology (Solomon, 2009).

Consumers undergo distinct stages leading up to a purchase decision, beginning with the identification of their needs and desires (Kotler & Keller, 2009). They then assess available product information to pinpoint the most satisfying products and services, engaging in comparisons with alternatives before reaching a decision (Ajzen, 1991). The best predictor of behavior is often the intention to perform that behavior. Intentions, in turn, are shaped by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Kotler, 2000).

Attitudes encapsulate an individual's overarching evaluation of a behavior as either positive or negative (Kotler, 2000). Subjective norms gauge the perceived social pressures influencing the decision to engage or abstain from a specific behavior. Meanwhile, perceived behavioral control reflects an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty associated with performing the behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2009). It's noteworthy that perceived behavioral control can directly influence behavior when perceptions align with actual control. These factors collectively contribute to the intricate web of influences that guide consumer behavior through the decision-making process (Myers, 2003).

The Theory of Planned Behavior, a widely utilized social cognition model, has been employed in this study to comprehend consumer health behavior concerning the intake of dietary supplement products (Ajzen, 1991). This approach aids in crafting a theoretical framework for the research, concentrating on individual motivational factors that determine the likelihood of engaging in or refraining from a specific behavior (Montano & Kaspersky, 2002). Marketers have long been intrigued by consumer behavior, as understanding it is pivotal for navigating the marketplace.

Insight into consumer behavior allows marketers to grasp how individuals think, feel, and make choices among alternatives such as products and brands, all while considering the influential role of their environment (Myers, 2003). A consumer's purchasing decisions are shaped by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors (Kotler & Keller, 2009). While many of these factors are uncontrollable and lie beyond the reach of marketers, acknowledging and considering them is crucial for comprehending the intricate and multifaceted nature of consumer behavior.

Consumer decision making

Consumer behavior, a substantial area of study, often centers around the intricate process of consumer choice (Kotler, 2000). Both utility theory in economics and attitude theory in social psychology share robust similarities and serve as foundational frameworks for comprehending consumer decision and choice processes (Solomon, 2009). Consumers engage in the acquisition of goods and services with the goal of deriving benefits from their usage. While economics predominantly focuses on outcomes, consumer behavior places emphasis on the underlying process (Kotler, 2000).

In contrast to assuming perfect conditions, consumer behavior researchers explicitly acknowledge the impact of situational elements on behavior and the inherent variability among individuals. Real estate transactions, characterized as high-involvement goods, typically necessitate complex decision-making (Kim, 2004). Three major comprehensive models of this kind of consumer decision-making, including those proposed by Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1968), Howard and Sheth (1969), and Nicosia (1966), delineate the psychological states and behaviors of individual purchasers from the recognition of a need through the stages of information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and final evaluation of consequences. The underlying assumption is that the act of making a purchase is preceded by a sequence of mental information processing (Kotler, 2000). This entails a cognitive function in forming beliefs, an emotional component in developing positive or negative attitudes, and a motivated reaction culminating in the selection and purchase of the chosen product or service (Solomon, 2009).

Methodology

Conceptual framework

Drawing from the literature review, this research centers on constructing a conceptual framework delineating the pivotal factors influencing the Purchase Intention of bottled drinking water. The framework underscores key variables, including trust, health appearance, price perception, income, and region. These variables have been recurrently employed in the literature to gauge attitudes towards purchase intention.

Trust and intention to purchase:

Investigating the impact of trust on the intention to purchase among family holders involves assessing the degree of reliance and confidence they place in the source, quality, and reliability of bottled drinking water. Trust could be influenced by factors such as brand reputation, product reviews, and previous experiences, all of which contribute to shaping the intention to purchase.

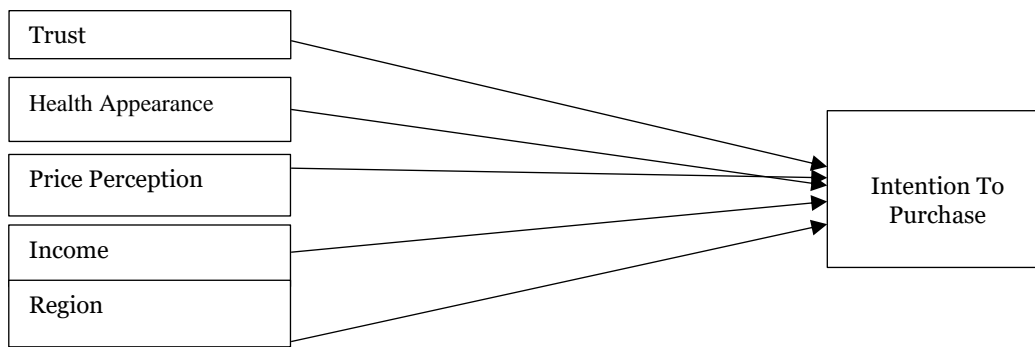


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Health appearance and intention to purchase:

Analyzing how health appearance affects the intention to purchase among family holders entails examining perceptions of the health benefits associated with bottled drinking water. This may include considerations such as the clarity, purity, and perceived health-enhancing qualities of the water, which collectively influence consumers' decisions to opt for bottled water.

Price perception and intention to purchase:

Understanding the impact of price perception on the intention to purchase involves evaluating how family holders perceive the cost of bottled drinking water in relation to its perceived value. Factors such as affordability, perceived fairness, and the perceived value for money play a crucial role in shaping the intention to purchase.

Family holder's income and intention to purchase:

Exploring the relationship between family holders' income and their intention to purchase entails assessing how the financial capacity of individuals influences their decisions to buy bottled drinking water. Income levels may affect the affordability and accessibility of bottled water, impacting the intention to purchase.

Regional influence on intention to purchase:

Investigating the impact of region on the intention to purchase among family holders involves understanding how geographical location and regional characteristics shape preferences and priorities regarding bottled drinking water. Regional factors may include climate, water quality, and cultural preferences that influence the decision-making process.

Each of these inquiries aims to shed light on the specific factors influencing the intention to purchase bottled drinking water among family holders, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior in different dimensions.

Derivation of hypotheses

Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis are formed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between trust and intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

H2: There is a significant relationship between health appearance and intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

H3: There is a significant relationship between price perception and intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

H4: There is a significant relationship between income and intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

H5: There is a significant relationship between region and intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

Nature of the study

This study adopts an analytical approach, aiming to elucidate the specific relationships between the dependent and independent variables. Unlike a descriptive study that merely outlines characteristics, the analytical nature of this research delves into the underlying reasons and mechanisms behind observed phenomena. Conducted as a field study, it investigates the most significant factors influencing the intention to purchase bottled drinking water among family holders in the Batticaloa district. The research unfolds in a natural environment, capturing events as they naturally occur, making it a non-contrived setting.

Population and sampling procedures

The population of this study is families living in Batticaloa district. This study utilized convenience sampling method to identify the sample due to the time and cost restrictions. As a result, 150 families living in Batticaloa district have been identified and selected as the sample of this study.

Data collection

The foundation of this study rests on primary data gathered through a survey methodology. Primary data, characterized by its fresh and first-hand nature, was acquired using structured questionnaires. The questionnaire employed in this study consisted of multiple-choice questions. The survey instrument was designed in two segments: the first part encompassed questions pertaining to personal data, while the second part focused on evaluating customer attitudes concerning the intention to purchase bottled drinking water. This method allowed for a systematic and targeted exploration of the factors influencing consumer behavior in the context of bottled water purchases.

Data measurement

In this research, a Five-Point Likert Scale was employed to quantify variables through the use of questionnaires. For the purpose of analysis, SPSS version 23.0 was utilized. The statistical analysis was structured into two components: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were employed to present and summarize the data, utilizing tools such as charts, tables, mean, median, mode, as well as measures of dispersion, including variance and standard deviation.

On the other hand, inferential statistics were applied to draw broader insights from the data. Techniques such as the calculation of coefficients, multiple linear regression, correlation coefficients, and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) were used to explore relationships and patterns within the dataset. These analytical methods allowed for a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing the intention to purchase bottled drinking water among family holders in the Batticaloa district.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics

The mean value of the key factors influencing the intention to purchase is 4.2001. According to the continuum, this mean suggests that the key factors significantly influence the intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

The associated standard deviation of 0.6341 indicates a small dispersion, implying a relatively consistent impact across the key factors.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Family Holder’s Attitudes & Intention to Purchase

	Trust	Health appearance	Price of the bottled drinking water	Income of the family holder	Region	Key factors	Intention to purchase
Mean	4.2001	4.5115	4.1143	3.7253	4.5231	4.2001	4.1421
Std. Deviation	0.78112	0.7324	0.70231	0.68211	0.78944	0.63410	0.6512

Source: Survey results

As for the mean value of the intention to purchase, it stands at 4.1421. According to the continuum, this mean falls in the "high" range, indicating a strong intention to purchase bottled drinking water among family holders. The corresponding standard deviation of 0.6512 indicates a small dispersion, affirming a consistent and noteworthy effect on the intention to purchase.

In summary, both the key factors and the intention to purchase exhibit means and standard deviations that suggest a significant and consistently high impact on the decision to purchase bottled drinking water among family holders.

Inferential statistics

Table 2: Inferential Statistics of the Family Holder’s Attitudes & Intention to Purchase

		Trust	Health appearance	Price of the bottled drinking water	Income of the family holder	Region
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.789**	.802**	.854**	.801**	.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150

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

Source: Survey results

The Pearson Correlation between trust and purchase intention is 0.789, signifying a positive correlation. This result indicates a robust positive relationship between trust and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water in the Batticaloa district. The strength of the relationship is statistically significant, with the correlation achieving significance at the 0.05 levels (two-tailed). Hence, there is statistical support for the assertion that a positive relationship exists between these two variables. Consequently, this study substantiates Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between trust and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

The Pearson Correlation value between health appearance and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water is 0.802, indicating a strong positive correlation. This suggests a robust and positive relationship between health appearance and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water in the Batticaloa district. Furthermore, the correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 levels (two-tailed), providing statistical support for the assertion that a positive relationship exists between health appearance and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water. Consequently, this study supports Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between health appearance and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

The Pearson Correlation between the price of bottled drinking water and purchase intention is 0.854, indicating a strong positive correlation. This result suggests a robust positive relationship between family holders' price perception and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water in the Batticaloa district. The strength of the relationship is statistically significant, with the correlation achieving significance at the 0.05 levels (two-tailed). Therefore, there is statistical support for the assertion that price perception significantly influences the intention to purchase bottled drinking water. Consequently, this study supports Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between price perception and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

The Pearson Correlation between the income of the family holder and the purchase intention is 0.801, indicating a strong positive correlation. This result implies a robust positive relationship between income and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water in the Batticaloa district. The strength of the relationship is statistically significant, with the correlation achieving significance at the 0.05 levels (two-tailed). Hence, there is statistical support for the assertion that income significantly influences the intention to purchase bottled drinking water. Consequently, this study supports Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between income and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

The Pearson Correlation between the region and the purchase intention is 0.709, indicating a strong positive correlation. This suggests a robust positive relationship between the region and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water in the Batticaloa district. The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 levels (two-tailed), providing support for the assertion that the region significantly influences the intention to purchase bottled drinking water. Therefore, this supports Hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship between region and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water.

Conclusion

This study aimed to "identify the key factors influencing the intention to purchase bottled drinking water, with a specific focus on family holders in the Batticaloa district". The Pearson correlation values (r) between the independent and dependent variables were found to be positive and statistically significant. The analysis indicates a strong positive relationship between the key factors and the intention to purchase bottled drinking water. The results suggest that these key factors play a significant role in influencing the intention to purchase bottled drinking water among family holders in the Batticaloa district. Specifically factors such as trust, health appearance, price perception, income, and region are influencing the intention to purchase bottled drinking water among family holders, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior.

References

Ajzen I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decisions Processes*.

- Andrew F; (1992). The great British potato: a study of consumer demand, attitudes and perceptions. *British Food Journal*. 94.
- Ali, A., Khan, A. A., Ahmed, I., and Shahzad, W. (2011). Determinants of Pakistani Consumers' Green Purchase Behavior: Some Insights. *Insig* 217-226.
- An, J. H. (2006). Consumption Type of Housewives about Organic. *Koran journal food and nutrition*, 19(1), 28-37.
- Bredahl, L. (2000). Determinants of Consumer Attitudes and Purchase Intentions with Regard to Genetically Modified Foods.
- Lone Bredahl (2000). Determinants of Consumer Attitude Results of a Cross-National Survey.
- Canavari, M. B. (2002). Food safety and organic food demand in Italy. *British food journal*, 220-232.
- Cunningham, R. (2001). The organic consumer profile: Not only who you think it is!, alpeberta, strategic service unit . *Agriculture unit and rural development*.
- Davies, A. T. (1995). Who buy organic food? *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 217-226.
- Dunlap, R., and Jones, R. (2002). *Environmental concern*. Michelson. London: Greenwood.
- Fam, K. a. (2007). "Cultural values and effective executional techniques in advertising: a cross-country and product category study of urban young adults in Asia", *International Marketing*, 519-38.
- Furst, T. C. (1996). Food Choice: A conceptual model of process, 26,247-267.
- Grunert, K. G. (2001). Designer-made meat and dairy products: consumer-led product development, *Livestock Production Science*, 83-98.
- Hetherington, M. J. (1992). Visual and instrumental attribute models of fruit juices and milk. *Visual and instrumental attribute models of fruit juices and milk*. 3,165-178.
- J. Kuhland & J. Beckman (1985). *From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior*, Action-control: From cognitions to behavior, Heidelberg: Springer.
- Keller K.L. (2001). Building customer-based brand equity. *Marketing management*. Vol. 10(2).
- Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L (2009). *Marketing Management*. 13th edition. New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice-Hall.
- Kotler, P. (2000). *Marketing Management*, 10th ed., US: Prentice-Hall.
- Kim, Y. H. (2004). Health Risk Behaviors and Their relationship with selected physical construction. 298-306.
- Magali, M. (2012). A Consumers' Attitudes towards Eco-friendly Products and Purchase Intention in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector. *Green marketing*.
- Meier-Ploeger, A. a. (1999). Trends between countries. *Ecology and farming*.

- Myers, C. (2003). Managing brand equity: A look at the impact of attributes. *Journal of product and management.*, 129(1), 39-53.
- P, L., & Sirinya, A. (2001). Consumer Attitude toward Spa in Thailand. *Journal of marketing*, 56(3).
- Pieniak, Z. V. (2007). European consumers' use of and trust in information sources about fish. *Food Quality and Preferences.* 18, 1050-1063.
- Radder, L. A. (2005). Factors affecting food choice in relation to venison: A South Asian example, *Meatscience*, 71, 583-589.
- Saba, A. and Messina, F. (2003) Attitudes towards organic foods and risk 14, 637-645.
- Samad, M. (2004). Water institutional reforms in Sri Lanka. International Water Management Institute, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 125-140.
- Sekaran, U. (2007). *Research Methods for Business*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. New York.
- Solomon, M. R. (2009). *Consumer Behavior (Buying, having and being): Attitudes (8th edition.)*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Sukati1, A. M. (2012). The Effect of External Factors on Purchase Intention amongst Young. Canadian Center of Science and Education.
- Sylvander, B. (1995). Conventions on quality in the fruit and vegetables sector. results on organic sector, *Acta horticulture*, 241-246.
- Tustin, M. and Lockshin, L. (2001). Reg Australian and New Zealand Wine Industry J Demand for genetically modified. *Food quality of preference*, 18(3), 471-481.