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Understanding The Purchase Intention of Vape Devices Amongst Young Adults In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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Abstract

Vape Devices have become the forefront of the lives of young adults. Since vaping was introduced to counter the harmful elements of tobacco-afflicted traditional-based cigarettes, the popularity of vaping as a healthier alternative has been undeniably rising. Buyers, especially younger consumers, seem to purchase vape devices at a higher rate, as it allows them to be assured that there is a healthier alternative to their addiction woes. In Kuala Lumpur, being an urban playground, the purchase of vape-related products has risen over the past years. As more young adults seem to purchase vape products due to their newly minted financial freedom, the purchase intention of these consumers has risen, causing various marketing efforts to be designed to target these groups. However, little research has been done into the purchase intention of these products in urban areas in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. This study adapts the Theory of Planned Behavior to understand the purchase intention of young adults for vape devices. The three independent variables in this study that are proposed to influence the purchase intention of young adults towards vape products are mainly Perceived Behavioral Control, Attitude, and Subjective Norm. The data was further sampled using the Convenience sampling method, using a 5-item Likert scale for respondent data analysis. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire items were further confirmed using statistical methods, namely Average Variance Extracted, Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha. Hypotheses testing used the AMOS SPSS (v.24) software to tabulate the results via Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Based on the results tabulated, it is shown that Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral Control influence the purchase intention of vape devices among young adults in Kuala Lumpur. The results support that younger adults often crave belonging to their social surroundings, allowing their social hierarchy to dictate their buying behavior. It is further suggested that the future of vaping in Malaysia will most likely be determined by marketing strategies and market adaptability to suit diverse changes in buyer behavior.

Keywords

Vape Devices, Young Adults, Malaysia, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Purchase Intention

1.0 Introduction

The vaping phenomenon has been an impactful element in most young adults' lives in this past decade. As more young consumers are becoming more self-conscious of the dangers of smoking and tobacco, it is prevalent that they seem to choose healthier options to cure their smoking habits (Stalgaitis et al., 2020). Corporations worldwide have capitalized on this current change, and various vaping devices are being marketed to younger buyers to entice them. More organizations market vape devices as a healthier alternative to traditional smoking, hence making it more likely for consumers to have the urge to purchase vape devices (Donaldson et al., 2021). In Malaysia, the vaping phenomenon is growing, and it has caused a variety of marketing tactics to be directed toward the younger generation to capitalize on the current craze (Driezen et al., 2022). Younger consumers make up a large cohort of vape device users (Alpert et al., 2021). As vape devices are spreading throughout the nation, it is also crucial from a marketing stakeholder's point of view to understand further what influences these young adults in their

buying choices. Vaping has become a crucial aspect of marketing promotion to create a style that impresses young people. Marketers create trendy methods to entice these young consumers to buy these vape devices. As vaping has a prevalence of being viewed as healthier than traditional cigarettes to the environment and the body, it is used tremendously to up the ante when it comes to promotional aspects (Alpert et al., 2021). Young people worldwide regard vaping as a significant trendy practice, especially in building a good social circle (Stalgaitis et al., 2020; Alpert et al., 2021). This has caused the vaping industry to be a significant bane as it is being abused by many buyers who are too young to consume it (Galderisi et al., 2020). As vaping becomes popular, establishments rush to capitalize on this issue, maximizing their investments in these products as they promise significant profits and returns (Stalgaitis et al., 2020). As it is being prominently seen in movies aimed at the younger generation, it is becoming one of the significant trends in buying practices worldwide (Stalgaitis et al., 2020).

1.1. Problem Statement

Vaping has grown in Malaysia and Asia over the past decade. As more millennials seem to embrace this trend, it emphasizes the importance of establishments capitalizing on it. However, much needs to be done to understand the evolving behaviour of the younger generation these days. This is because young adults are a unique group of buyers, often having various factors influencing them when purchasing a product. As establishments grapple with catering to these young consumers, it is often essential to capitalize on their behavioural aspects to further understand and perhaps use helpful, innovative steps to reach out through advertising. Much needs to be done to understand the various issues that control these buyers' shopping behaviours, as there seems to be a gap in the mannerisms of the purchasing behaviour of these consumers when buying vape devices. It is known that younger adults prefer buying vape devices as their popularity has risen, but much more needs to be done to understand the various factors that influence young buyers to buy the devices. Even though vaping has been significant in being healthier than the traditional smoking mechanism, there are also corporations bringing up the safety concerns of this new practice, especially the long-term side effects of these devices on a person's body. Thus, it is necessary and relevant to understand further the manipulating dimensions that influence younger consumers' intention to purchase these vape devices.

2.0 Literature Review

This next chapter narrates the literature related to the various studies in this research. This segment further discusses the relevance of variables and the susceptibility of the modified and applied models.

2.1 Vaping industry

The vaping industry is booming and is worth several billion dollars (Park, 2020). A few factors are contributing to the expansion of the vaping market, including the widespread belief that it is safer than smoking, the wide range of flavors offered, and the general warming up to the idea of vaping (Nutt et al., 2016; Mendelsohn et al., 2020). Vaping has a divided public opinion; some consider it a helpful tool for smokers trying to cut down on harmful substances, while others worry about the effects it may have on public health, especially among young people (Kathuria, 2022; Boakye et al., 2020).

2.1.1 Vape Devices in Malaysia

Vaping has become a popular pastime among the younger generation in Malaysia. It has an increasing value locally, showcasing the popularity of this activity in Malaysia (Driezen et al., 2022). It is also prevalent that most youths in urban areas in the city seem to use vape devices as compared to traditional tobacco-based cigarettes (Sinnathamby et al., 2021). This can be because Kuala Lumpur is Malaysia's

capital city, with a vibrant group of young buyers. As the younger demographic tends to surround the cities in any country, it is also seen that Malaysian youths have a significant demand for these vaping devices (Sinnathamby et al., 2021; Zulkifli et al., 2020). With an estimated more than a million young adults in Kuala Lumpur, it is seen to be a vibrant playground for the vaping industry to prosper (Ali et al., 2022).

2.2 Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a psychological theory that describes how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence people's intentions and actions. Introduced by Ajzen (1985), TPB augments the Theory of Reasoned Action by incorporating perceived behavioral control. The theory itself is a frontrunner that has been previously tested to be an evident model for understanding consumers' purchase intention in the global market. It has been significantly seen to be applied across a variety of disciplines and industries, often proven to be successful in understanding consumer behavior (Bhutto et al., 2022).

2.2.1 Perceived Behavioral Control

In the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to undertake a specific behavior. When people are confident in their capacity to do an activity, they are more likely to form the intention to do so and to carry it out. As younger consumers are new earners and are more likely to be financially stable, they tend to have more robust control of their finances (Song et al., 2021). Younger adults who earn money for the first time have reasonable perceived behavioral control to allow themselves to feel good about spending on items for their personal use (Robichaud et al., 2022).

2.2.2 Subjective Norm

In conclusion, subjective norms indicate the impact of social pressure on an individual's intention to engage in an activity. Suppose the individual believes that significant others expect them to conduct the action and is motivated to satisfy those expectations. In that case, the subjective norm will impact their intention to perform the behavior. Younger adults seem to be at the forefront of being influenced by their peers in their purchase decisions (Song et al., 2021). As people of a younger age seem to rely much on societal pressures, they tend to succumb to following their peers in their buying choices as consumers (Robichaud et al., 2022). This shows the prevalence of subjective norms when influencing the behavior and intentions of consumers, especially younger consumers.

2.2.3 Attitude

In the Theory of Planned Conduct (TPB), attitude refers to a person's positive or negative evaluation or appraisal of the conduct. With subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, attitude is one of three significant factors that predict an individual's desire to engage in a behavior. Attitude has been seen to be a significant element in dominating consumer behavior in the past, with attitudinal changes often seen to be prevalent among younger consumers (Guan et al., 2022). The idea of attitude is vital in this study as it shows the preferred outcome that the consumer has towards the idea of vaping and e-cigarettes. Attitude is often created by a complex environmental influence, often coming from the surroundings of a consumer. Younger people tend to be directed or influenced heavily by their attitude to act on an issue (Ragelienė et al., 2020). It is common for younger adults to have an internal attitude that changes how they behave in a buying setting. Younger consumers will often be mindful of their purchases to impress their friends and may also buy due to the actions influenced by their media (Ragelienė et al., 2020).

2.3 Purchase Intention of Young Consumers towards Vape Devices

Younger consumers make up the bulk of buyers of vape devices worldwide. It is seen that the introduction of vaping has grabbed the world by storm, especially among younger generations. Many establishments profit from these vape-related products due to their prevalence of health benefits and safer alternatives to cigarette smoking (Nutt et al., 2016). Many organizations profit and capitalize from

the sudden rush of consumers toward these trendy practices. As many younger consumers are newly minted earners, their purchasing power is much lower than the average adult earner, and they may also tend to buy a cheaper product in the long run (Varah et al., 2021). Since vape devices are much more economical for younger adults, it is only natural for the choices to be skewed toward vape devices than traditional cigarettes.

2.4 The Significance of this Research

This research prominently discusses the various behavioral issues of young adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It is understood that this study will be helpful for industry personnel to discover consumerist changes among people of a particular group and their preferences toward vaping devices. As tobacco seems to be dangerous to the population generally, it is only necessary that the alternative to traditional smoking cigarettes is further understood. This research is significant in the fact that it will help stakeholders, such as establishments selling e-cigarettes, to further understand the elements that entice consumers to buy these vape devices. Establishments selling these devices may further understand the points of importance to consumers of a younger age towards buying vape devices, and further emphasis may be put on these essential elements. By understanding the various ticks that make younger adults purchase these devices, stakeholders may choose a right strategy and multiple techniques to increase their market share and ensure that their promotional efforts are not in vain.

2.5 Research Questions

This study examined the variables from the Theory of Planned Behavior and its influence on the purchase intention of younger consumers toward Vape devices. As such, the research questions in this study are as follows:

1. Does Perceived Behavioral Control Impact Young Adults' Purchase Intention of Vape Devices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?
2. Does Subjective Norm Impact Young Adults' Purchase Intention of Vape Devices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?
3. Does Attitude Impact Young Adult's Purchase Intention of Vape Devices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?

2.6 Research Objectives

It is proposed that this research will be able to have an aim to understand the following objectives on impulsive buying:

1. To determine the impact of Perceived Behavioral Control on Young Adults' Purchase Intention of Vape Devices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
2. To determine the impact of Subjective Norms on Young Adults' Purchase Intention of Vape Devices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
3. To determine the impact of attitude on young adults' purchase intention for vape devices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

2.7 Framework of study

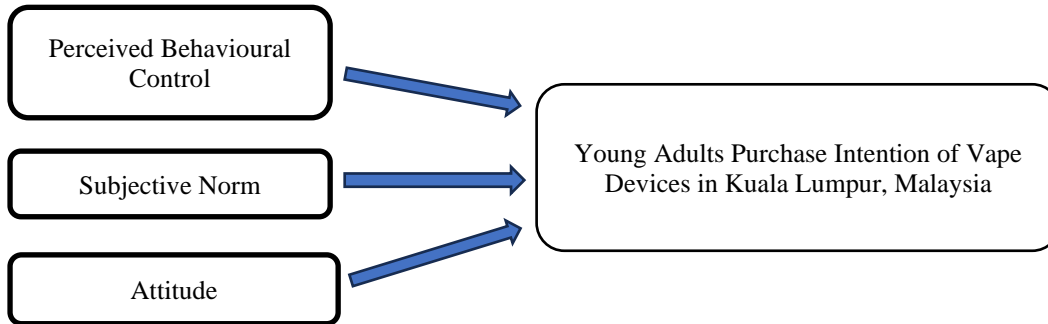


Figure 1: The Framework of the Study

2.8 Research Hypothesis

H1: Perceived Behavioral Control has a positive relationship with Young Adults' Purchase Intention of Vape Devices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

H2: Subjective Norm has a positive relationship with Young Adults' Purchase Intention of Vape Devices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

H3: Attitude has a positive relationship with Young Adults' Purchase Intention of Vape Devices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

3.0 Methodological Process

The following subchapters will discuss the study's research methodology and the various steps taken to conduct the research.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed quantitative research methodology and utilized SPSS AMOS (version 24) to analyze data and get insights from the respondents. The study employed demographic analysis to ascertain essential information about the survey participants. Further testing was performed using SPSS AMOS (v.24) for path analysis. Because this study focuses on younger adults residing near significant cities in the Klang Valley, researchers have chosen the convenience sample approach, considered one of the most practical sampling strategies. Participants were given an electronic link to the questionnaire, which included a bar code to make it easier for them to interact with the data. This aligns with our demographic analysis, indicating that the target audience comprises tech-savvy individuals who are younger and prefer engaging with their smartphones and other electronic gadgets consistently throughout the day.

3.2 Instrument

The study utilized a 5-Scale-Likert-based questionnaire to understand the replies of the target consumers. As shown in Table 1, the questionnaire items were adapted from several sources to fit the study.

Table 1: Questionnaire Items

Construct	Items	Sources	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)/AVE/Composite Reliability (CR)

Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	PBC1: I have the right skills to use a vaping device PBC2: I have sufficient time to participate in vaping-based activities PBC3: I am well-equipped to participate in vaping activities PBC4: I am confident that I can engage in vaping-related activities if I want.	de Jong, Neulen & Jansma (2019) Meng & Cui (2020) Huang et al. (2021) Jang (2022)	CA (0.80) AVE (0.889) CR (0.891)
Attitude (AT)	AT1: I think it's suitable for young adults to participate in vaping activities AT2: Vaping feels better AT3: I would instead engage in vaping, even though it may be more costly. AT4: I feel that vaping is healthier than other devices	Wang et al. (2018) Ajzen (1991) Tsakiridou et al. (2008)	CA (0.887) AVE (0.782) CR (0.893)
Subjective Norm (SN)	SN1: My family supports me in vaping. SN2: My friends support me in my vaping activities. SN3: My neighbors support me in vaping activities.	Ajzen (1991) Taufique & Vaithianathan (2018) Jang (2022)	CA (0.987) AVE (0.887) CR (0.877)
Vape Device Buying Behavioural Intention (VBIT)	VBIT1: I intend to engage in any activities with vaping usage VBIT2: I will try to engage in vaping VBIT3: I plan to engage in vaping-related activities.	Jang (2022)	CA (0.976) AVE (0.863) CR (0.986)

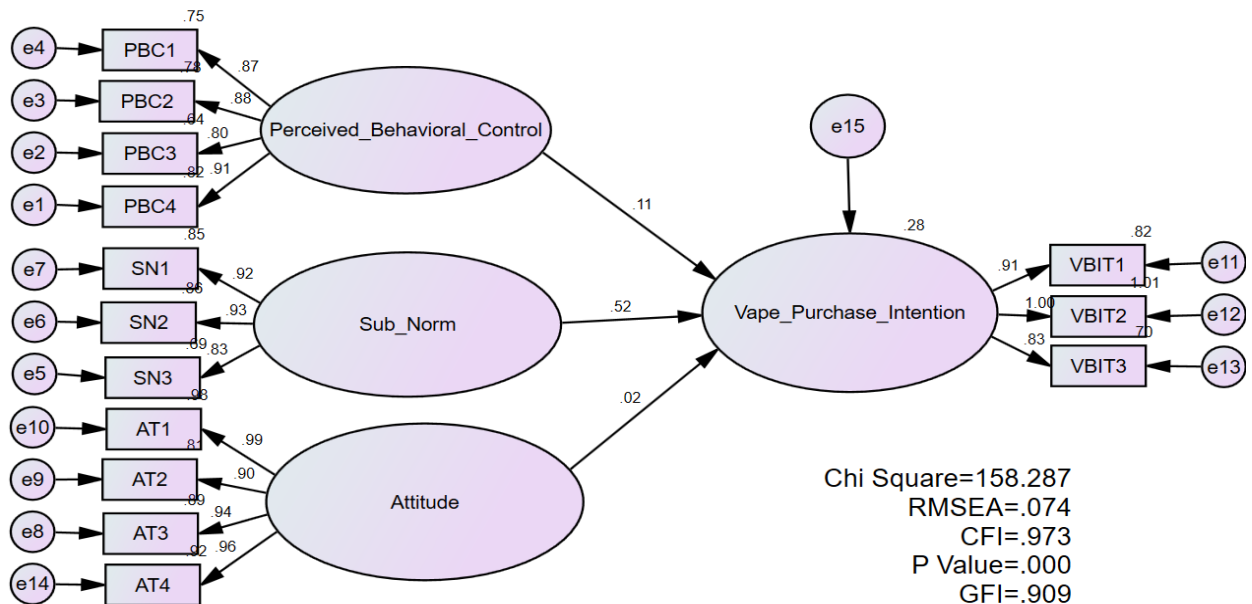


Figure 2: Structural Model

4.0 Results and Analysis

Table 2 displays the demographic factors used to analyze the behavior of the Klang Valley respondents. With 287 participants, the sample size was appropriate for a Structural Equation Modeling analysis

(Kline, 2011; 2023). According to the data, 84.3% of the young adults in this study are male, and 40.76% are in the 21–26 age bracket. Vaping is observed by the majority of responders at least once or twice a week (around 54%).

Table 2: Demographic Analysis

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	242	84.3
Female	45	15.6
Age		
18-21 Years Old	81	28.22
21-26 Years Old	117	40.76
>30 Years Old	89	31.01
Monthly Household Income (MYR)		
Less than 2000 MYR	48	16.72
Around 2000-5000 MYR	163	56.70
More than 5000 MYR	76	26.40
Frequency of Vaping Activities (Per Week)		
1-2 times per week	155	54.00
3-5 times per week	95	33.10
6-7 times per week	37	12.89

Figure 2 shows that the structural model is acceptable and appropriate for the investigation. The dependent variables showed a favorable correlation with factor loadings. Table 3 shows that the model fit was evaluated adequately using RMSEA, CFI, and Chi-Square variables. According to Hu et al. (1999) and Teng et al. (2016), the results are deemed suitable for research because the RMSEA values were below the threshold of 0.8 and the CFI values were over the threshold of 0.9.

Table 3: CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Indices for Model Fit	Values
Chi-Square	158.287
RMSEA	0.074
CFI	0.973
GFI	0.909
P value	0.00

The validity and reliability of the instrument were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, average variance explained (AVE), and composite reliability (CR), as demonstrated by Hair et al. (2011), Bagozzi & Yi (1988), and Yarimoglu et al. (2019). The results of these tests are summarized in Table 1. Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and CR values were substantially higher than required (Hair et al., 2011; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Yarimoglu et al., 2019).

Table 4: Hypotheses Analysis

Hypothesis Testing		Estimate	Result	P value
H ₁	PBC → VPI	0.11	Supported	0.00
H ₂	SN → VPI	0.52	Supported	0.00
H ₃	AT → VPI	0.02	Unsupported	0.00

*PBC: Perceived Behavioral Control

**SN: Subjective Norm

***AT: Attitude

****VPI: Vape Devices Purchase Intention

The results of the research hypotheses are summarized in Table 4. The findings indicate substantial correlations among young adults' intention to purchase vape devices, perceived behavioral control (PBC), and subjective norms (SN). Table 4 illustrates the hypotheses' analysis, which suggests that H₁ and H₂ are statistically significant, but H₃ is not. The assumption that there is a correlation between the purchase intention of young adults to purchase vaporizer devices and their consumer attitude was rejected by the low value (β of 0.02, $p=0.00$). However, there appears to be a substantial correlation ($\beta = 0.11$, $p=0.00$ and $\beta = 0.52$, $p=0.00$) between Perceived Behavioral Control and Subjective Norms about the purchase intention of vape devices among young adults.

5.0 Discussion

As seen in this research, Subjective norms and Perceived Behavioral Control still seem to be manipulating the behavioral intentions of younger consumers. Consumers use their peers as a yardstick to make buying choices in the industry. As younger people still consider their peers significant influences, it is normal for them to follow their peers' choices. Due to this, perhaps more can be done from a marketing point of view so that the vaping industry can have more targeted promotions held to groups of younger consumers. These factors tend to be a force that assists these younger buyers in choosing vaping devices. As younger adults are often new earners and have stable jobs, it is fair to say that they are much more in control of their lives and actions than when they were younger. Younger consumers make more choices quickly as financial stability allows them to control their actions. Any spending behavior is reflected in the fact that they have some financial dominance or stability compared to when they were younger, thus allowing them to have more substantial control of their actions as consumers. This explains that younger consumers have better buying power for vape-related devices due to the financial stability that they newly have from their first jobs. The results also show that attitude doesn't influence the buying intention of college students when purchasing vape devices. This could be due to the prevalence that attitudes may be formed by interactions when people are young, and many families do inform younger college students about the dangers of smoking and vaping (Andrade et al., 2020). However, due to their rebellious methods during their younger adult stages of life, they may choose to ignore those internal feelings (Nails et al., 2023). This is evident as younger people tend to be more rebellious in college, often experiencing newfound freedom as adults away from home (Nails et al., 2023).

6.0 Future Recommendations and Limitations

This study discovered the relationship influencing young adults' purchase intentions of Vape devices. Vape devices are a current trend, and marketers may need to capitalize on practical promotional tools to gain young consumers' interest. This study added to the body of knowledge as to why the vape industry may be prominently growing in Malaysia, with significant results that show the importance of peer pressure on the behavior of young adults in Malaysia. There may be limitations to this study in the geographical location where this research was taken, as this study was done mainly in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital city. Perhaps future research may focus on East Malaysia, West Malaysia, or even beyond the country to other parts of Asia. Students from other parts of Malaysia, mainly in the eastern part of the geographic section or even the western part of Malaysia, may exhibit unique behaviors in their vaping behavior.

7.0 Conclusion

This study adds to the research on the behavior of young customers towards vape devices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and made a significant addition to the research gap. It is seen that younger consumers in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur still depend primarily on their peers to make choices in their buying, as seen by the prevalence of subjective norms being a dominant factor in this study. It is also seen that their understanding of the control of their lives, particularly as young earners, is also an exciting element that shows an impressive amount of influence on the purchase intention of vape devices. Perhaps this study will allow stakeholders and marketers to understand these consumers better, prompting them to increase the brand strategies to impress and entice younger consumers. As vaping grows more progressively, it is hoped that marketers will also utilize more effort to inform younger buyers of the dangers and limitations of vape devices and their effects on the bodies.

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Tarikh : 20 Januari 2023

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Tuan,

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Sekian, terima kasih.

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Saya yang menjalankan amanah,

Setuju.

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Timbalan Ketua Pustakawan

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