

# Factors Influencing Students' Preference for Green Tea at UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang

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## ABSTRACT

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*One of the healthiest coffee beverages, green tea is incredibly refreshing and soothing. Nowadays, the majority of younger consumers see and perceive tea more as a sensual and healthy beverage, which is different from the past. Green tea consumption has many health benefits for students, such as affecting students' eating patterns and food intake. The purpose of this study is to identify the factors, such as students' habits, expected health benefits, and sensory attributes, that influence UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang students' preferences for green tea. 400 respondents who have experienced and acknowledged the benefits of green tea participated in this study using an online survey. Descriptive, correlational, and multiple regression analyses were used to analyze the data. The results show that students' habits have a strong influence on their preference for green tea, and the results are statistically significant when compared to others. Student habits have a profound impact on their preference for green tea, making it a popular choice worldwide. It was believed that this study would boost green tea marketing, especially in Malaysia. By opting for green tea, students contribute to knowledge generation, enhance their professional applications, and contribute to positive social change. Food operators can tap into the growing popularity of this healthy beverage and stay ahead of the curve in the ever-evolving food industry by incorporating green tea drinks into their menus.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tea is made from the *Camellia sinensis* plant and consumed in various types of drinks, which are also known as oolong tea, green tea, or black tea in many regions of the world. It originated in China and has become popular across the world in the last 2000 years. Tea is also used in daily life as a common beverage and as a treatment for a variety of illnesses, and it has great economic and social appeal (Cabrera, Artacho, and Giménez, 2006). According to Sinija and Mishra (2008), in terms of health benefits, green tea has been shown to be preferable to black tea. Chacko, Thambi, Kuttan, and Nishigaki (2010) explained that polyphenols, which are the main components, are responsible for green tea's antioxidant and other additional benefits, and flavonoids are the most abundant polyphenols in green tea. As various functions of green tea have been scientifically identified, consumption gradually increases depending on the health needs of modern people. Green tea is rich in antioxidants, which help protect the body against free radicals and reduce the risk of chronic illnesses. Additionally, it contains caffeine, which enhances cognitive function and boosts alertness. These benefits make green tea an attractive choice for students who value their health and academic performance.

Apart from using green tea in cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, the preference people choose to drink and eat foods incorporated with green tea must be influenced by their sensory preferences, lifestyle, and expected health benefits, which may be the factors for which they enjoy the green tea. In addition, Shu and Mega (2017) did a study on 200 young Taiwanese people and found that the main reasons why young Taiwanese people prefer Japanese green tea are the taste (56%), their habit (33%), and the health benefits that can be obtained from green tea (11%). In Malaysia, green tea has become a popular trend among Malaysians, especially the younger generation. Green tea is seen as a healthy alternative to other beverages such as coffee and sodas. The increasing popularity of green tea among students in Malaysia has created a noticeable gap between student preferences for green tea and other types of tea. While other types of tea still have their fans, green tea is becoming the beverage of choice for many students. This is due to its health benefits, its taste, and its affordability.

However, there is a gap between student preferences for green tea. While some students may prefer to take green tea due to its benefits, there are still a lot of students who are not on the idea of drinking green tea. Thus, to bridge this gap, this study will look at the factors that influence UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang students' preference for green tea, such as consumer habits, expected health benefits, and sensory attributes. Therefore, the research objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the students' habits regarding their preference for green tea.
2. To examine the expected health benefits regarding students' preference for green tea.
3. To examine the sensory attributes regarding students' preferences for green tea.

Significantly, this study will benefit food operators because green tea drinks have gained popularity in recent years. Food operators not only offer health benefits but also provide a unique and refreshing beverage option for customers. By offering green tea drinks, food operators can cater to a broader customer base and promote a healthier lifestyle. From an academic perspective, this study will add body knowledge regarding students' preferences for green tea.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1 Green Tea in General***

According to Murali and Reddy (2019), the discovery of steaming the leaves to prevent oxidation is credited with discovering green tea's history in the 8th century. In the 12th century, new frying methods of "fixing" the leaves were invented. Both of these procedures, which are still in use today, produced teas with the distinctive unoxidized flavor and appearance of contemporary green teas. Since then, as green tea has grown in popularity and production, the processes for making green tea have changed throughout the years and developed. They added that green tea is one of the least processed forms of tea, as it is manufactured from unoxidized leaves. Green tea has a milder flavor than black tea and is less processed than black tea. After plucking the leaves, they are immediately steamed and heated. The leaves remain green because they are dried without being fermented. As a result, it has the highest concentration of antioxidants and beneficial polyphenols.

### ***2.2 Students' Habits***

Students' physical activity and food habits tend to form or develop in a university. Besides, students' eating habits and food selections were impacted by their previous dietary habits at home. Furthermore, students' eating habits were impacted by family feeding practices, which determined whether they were inclined or disinclined to eat certain foods. In general, students from rural origins ate more carbs (plain rice) and spicy dishes, whereas students from urban backgrounds ate more non-carbohydrates (processed food) and non-spicy foods (Kabir, Miah & Islam, 2018). Some people, on the other hand, use dietary supplements on a regular basis to provide enough nourishment. Thus, every nutrient performs a crucial role in maintaining bodily health, metabolism, and optimal function.

### ***2.3 Health Benefits from Green Tea***

Since ancient times, green tea has been used as a medicinal and healthy beverage. This plant has been used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat headaches, bodily aches and pains, indigestion, depression, detoxification, as an energizer, and to extend life in general (Cabrera et al., 2006). In addition, they explained that green tea leaves have three primary components that have impacts on human health such as xanthic bases (caffeine and theophylline), essential oils, and polyphenolic compounds. Caffeine stimulates alertness, facilitates idea association, and reduces weariness sensations by acting primarily on the central nervous system. Furthermore, Williams, Sergi, Mckune, Georgousopoulou, Mellor and Naumovski (2019) explained green tea contains L-Theanine which is nonproteinogenic amino acid. It has powerful antioxidant properties and contributes to a satisfying umami flavor experience. Multiple studies have found that this amino acid has a variety of therapeutic advantages, including to improve immunological function, cancer drug therapeutic efficacies, brain and gastrointestinal function, and antihypertensive effects.

### ***2.4 Sensory Attributes Contributed from Green Tea***

Chumngoen and Tan (2015) stated sensory attributes of food detectable by human senses, such as appearance, odor, flavor, taste, and texture, are frequently used to evaluate food quality. These features can also be used as a guide for choosing foods (Lyon & Lyon, 2001, as cited in Chumngoen & Tan, 2015). They also added that people respond to the sensory attributes of products based on their perspectives, whether they are customers or sensory panelists. The three

types of green tea used in this study do indeed have different sensory attributes, as they are produced using different kinds of methods but using the same green tea leaves.

## 2.5 Students' Preference of Green Tea

Several factors can impact student eating habits and food consumption. The factors are individual factors, such as cooking skills, the taste of food, food taboos, knowledge, and perceptions, meanwhile for societal factors, is a peer influence and social norms. On top of that, university factors like campus culture and exam frequency and for environmental factors such as availability of cooking resources, facilities and food prices emerged as key factors that influence students' food preferences and dietary intake (Kabir et al., 2018). Hence, there is an issue about what causes people to have different dietary tastes and choices even though eating preferences are believed to develop early in childhood (Nicklaus & Schwartz, 2019 as cited in Vink et al., 2020).

## 2.6 Research Hypothesis

Figure 1 illustrates the research framework for the study.

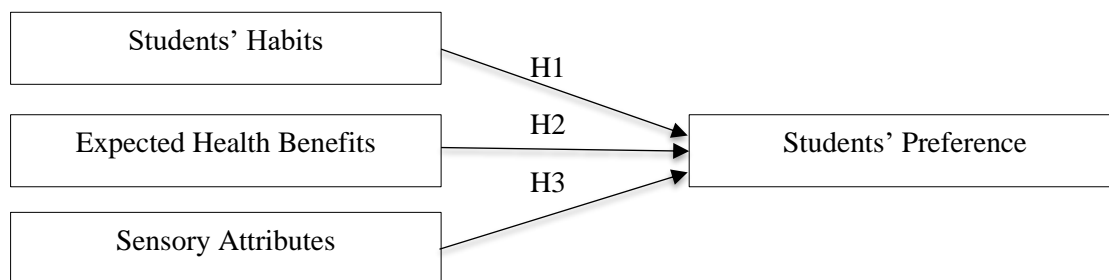


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Adopted from Randall and Sanjur (1981) as cited in Gorton and Barjolle (2013))

To determine the significance of each variable in this study, these hypotheses were tested. The discussion of these hypotheses is discussed in the results sections.

H1: There is a relationship between students' habits and students' preference for green tea.

H2: There is a relationship between expected health benefits and students' preference for green tea.

H3: There is a relationship between sensory attributes contributed and students' preference for green tea.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

For this study, a correlational study was used to identify the factors associated with UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang students' preferences for green tea. Correlational research, according to Seeram (2019), is a type of non-experimental study that makes it easier to identify and explain relationships between variables. Researchers use a correlational research design to assess the degree to which two or more variables are linked (Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2010). Plus, the quantitative survey method was used in this study. According to Sukamolson (2007), for audience segmentation, the quantitative survey approach is useful.

### ***3.2 Population and Sample***

The student chosen was from the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management at UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang, which includes diploma students from Hotel Management, Tourism Management, Foodservice Management, Culinary Arts Management, and Pastry Arts, as well as bachelor's degree students from Hotel Management and Culinary Art Management. According to Associate Professor Dr. Hashim Fadzil Ariffin, Head of Studies Centre, Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, and Encik Dahlan Abdullah, Head of Programme (Degree), the total number of students enrolled in these programs is 1640 until August 2022. Therefore, the suitable sample size for this study is 357. This survey, however, received 400 responses. The sampling method used is purposive sampling because it has the advantages of being the most widely used, being less expensive, saving time, and not requiring a list of all population components (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013).

### ***3.3 Research Instrument***

A Google Form was used to create an electronic questionnaire that is available in two languages: English and Bahasa Malaysia. The questions are separated into four sections. The following are the featured questions: Section A (respondent demographic profiles: gender, age, educational level, and housing status); Section B (5 items of student habits); Section C (5 items of expected health benefits); Section D (6 items of green tea sensory attributes); and Section E (2 items of student preferences). Therefore, the scale used for Section A is nominal and ratio, Section B is nominal and ordinal, Section C is ordinal, Section D is nominal and ordinal, and Section E is ordinal scale. The ordinal ratios for Sections C and D were calculated using two different sets of Likert scales, which are, for example, 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-somewhat disagree, 4-somewhat agree, 5-agree, and 6-strongly agree; and 1-very poor, 2-poor, 3-fair, 4-good, 5-very good, and 6-excellent. The questions for this survey are adapted and adopted from Shu and Mega (2017).

### ***3.4 Data Collection and Data Analysis***

This study is a cross-sectional survey. As a result, an electronic questionnaire via Google Form has been distributed to a targeted group of Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang students via internet platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram. This is due to the fact that some of the targeted students from UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang do not live on campus, where delivering surveys via an internet platform is more appropriate. Therefore, the data collection for this study went on for about 4 weeks. When analyzing the data, SPSS software version 28 was used for statistical and analytical purposes. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic data in this study, while Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to test a hypothesis.

## **4. RESULTS**

### ***4.1 Characteristics of the Respondents***

Descriptive analysis was used to examine the respondent's profile and other essential background details. Out of 400 respondents, 75.5% were female, and 24.5% were male. Most respondents were between the ages of 21 and 23 years old (66.3%) and had bachelor's degrees (67%) for education level. Regarding accommodation status, 57%, of students currently live off-campus.

## 4.2 Reliability of the Scales

According to Rafsandjani (2018), an instrument's reliability is determined by how error-free, consistent, and steady it is throughout time and across different scale items (Kiew et al., 2021). They also stated that the cutoff criteria, which employ the general rule of thumb, can exceed 0.50. The expected health benefits, sensory attributes that contributed, and students' preference variables all had Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.6, but the students' habit variable had one below 0.6, at Table 1. This indicates that the scales employed in the current study are reliable.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

| Variable                 | No of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|--------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Students' Habits         | 5           | 0.521            |
| Expected Health Benefits | 5           | 0.711            |
| Sensory Attributes       | 6           | 0.830            |
| Students' Preference     | 2           | 0.651            |

## 4.3 Relationship between Variables

There are three hypotheses describing the relationship between the variables. In order to test H1, H2, and H3, Pearson correlation ( $r$ ) was used. As indicated in the research hypothesis, the two-tail tests of significance were carried out. The outcome of Pearson's correlation matrix is displayed in Table 2. The Pearson correlation between students' habits and preferences was found to be moderately positive ( $r = .501$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Furthermore, the Pearson product correlation of expected health benefits and students' preferences was found to be the lowest ( $r = .103$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Finally, the correlation between sensory attributes and student preferences was found to be only weakly positive ( $r = .273$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The remaining two pairs of relationships between variables are also statistically significant. Hence, H1, H2, and H3 were supported.

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation Analysis

| Variables                | Students' Habits | Expected Health Benefits | Sensory Attributes | Students' Preferences |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Students' Habits         | 1                | .127*                    | .397*              | .501*                 |
| Expected Health Benefits |                  | 1                        | .138*              | .103*                 |
| Sensory Attributes       |                  |                          | 1                  | .273*                 |
| Students' Preference     |                  |                          |                    | 1                     |

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). N= 400

## 4.4 Standard Multiple Regression

The results in Table 3 show that the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is equal to 0.253, which means 25.3% of the variance of the dependent variable, which is students' preference for green tea, is explained by the independent variables, which are the students' habits, expected health benefits, and sensory attributes contributed by green tea.

Table 3: Coefficient Determinant Test

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .508 <sup>a</sup> | .258     | .253              | .90358                     |

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), Students' Habits, Expected Health Benefits, Sensory Attributes Contributes

This study used standard multiple regressions to examine the degree of relationship between students' habits, expected health benefits, sensory attributes contributed by green tea, and their preferences. According to the interpretation of the results of the multiple regression analysis and the adjusted R square, the dependent variable is caused by the effects of the independent factors (Lund Research Ltd., 2018). The objectives of these analyses, according to Rosufila, Fadzanaquieah, Ahmad, and Hasan (2018), are to determine how effectively the independent variables explain and describe the current research framework of this study. The results of the standard multiple regression analysis are displayed in Table 4. Students' habits have the highest and most significant beta value. This indicates that the habits of the students produce the strongest distribution to describe the dependent variable. The expected health benefits and sensory attributes contributed by green tea are not significant in contributing to the prediction of the dependent variable. In conclusion, the standard multiple regression analysis supports the result of H1, but not the results of H2 and H3.

Table 4: Standard Multiple Regression Analysis

| Model |                          | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig. |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
|       |                          | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| 1     | (Constant)               | .581                        | .433       |                           | 1.340 | .181 |
|       | Students' Habits         | .573                        | .059       | .463                      | 9.788 | .000 |
|       | Expected Health Benefits | .056                        | .076       | .032                      | .734  | .463 |
|       | Sensory Attributes       | .136                        | .076       | .085                      | 1.784 | .075 |

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Students' Preference

## 5. DISCUSSION

The current study proved that the conclusions could be used to explain the variables that affected students' preferences for green tea in their daily lives. The results of a correlation study demonstrate a positive and significant correlation between students' habits, expected health benefits, and sensory attributes contributed by green tea. From the findings, the gender ratio of 3:1 showed that most respondents were females between the ages of 21 and 23 years old. Additionally, it was discovered that most respondents currently live off-campus and hold bachelor's degrees. The results of the survey also show that students' habits have the greatest influence on their preferences for green tea.

The most significant influence on a student's preferences comes from their habits. It is possible that students prefer green tea because of their habits rather than the anticipated health benefits and sensory qualities that green tea provides. The results showed that students' habits have the greatest influence because it would be convenient to buy drinks at stores or make their own using instant green tea. As a social habit, students enjoying green tea in a social setting is an opportunity to connect with peers and engage in meaningful conversations. By embracing green tea as their beverage of choice, students are fostering a sense of community and shared experience. As we can see from this study, green tea is now widely available from many

companies in more convenient and affordable forms, such as powder and capsules. Students who might not have the time or means to produce green tea in its traditional form now have easier access to it. Furthermore, there are also many cafes and restaurants that are now offering green tea as a beverage option, which makes it more attractive for students.

Aside from that, results revealed that the expected health benefits and sensory attributes contributed by green tea are moderate in influencing students' preferences. Green tea has gained popularity as a beverage due to its numerous health benefits and appealing sensory attributes. However, some students seem to be uninterested in including green tea in their daily routines. This drink contains caffeine, which works by blocking adenosine receptors to stimulate the central nervous system. Due to the caffeine, addiction or tolerance may develop (Park, Bae, Im & Song, 2014).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

All types of green tea have different tastes, appearances, aromas, health benefits, and uniqueness. Thus, the consumer may have their own preferences in choosing the type of green tea to be consumed in their daily life. According to Abdullah, Abdurahman, and Hamali (2013), it is critical to realize that foodservice businesses change quickly when influenced by consumer preferences since choosing among valued options is the essence of customer preference, with acceptance suggesting a willingness to endure the status quo. They added that while preferences can be defined as an individual's attitude towards a group of things, customer preference is about making choices among valued options. Additionally, Lee, Kang, Jong, Kim, and Goh (2010) stated that greater research into customer preferences in the foodservice industry is necessary.

According to Riet et al. (2011), habits are behaviors that are often repeated over time. This definition of the word "habit" appears to be prominent in food studies as well. Neal, Wood, & Quinn (2006) and Neal and Wood (2007) highlighted that past rewarding events that strengthened habits might potentially be stimulated by the surroundings of their daily lives. This leads to behavior that mostly occurs under people's unconscious awareness. In addition, consumers just need a little information to make choices and pay minimal attention to details when learning about behavioral alternatives (Riet et al., 2011). While the preference for green tea among students may appear to be a simple matter of individual taste, students' habits play a significant role in shaping this preference. The health-conscious nature of students, their desire to excel academically, and their inclination towards social interactions all contribute to their fondness for green tea. As students continue to prioritize their overall well-being and seek out ways to enhance their academic performance, green tea is likely to remain a preferred choice among this demographic.

However, this study has some limitations that need to be underlined. The survey was carried out in one area, which is UiTM Pulau Pinang, while it would be better to carry out a survey in a different area or another campus to obtain other opinions widely. Although students' preference for green tea is evident, there are several avenues for future research to explore. These potential areas of research can help deepen an understanding of the underlying reasons behind students' preferences and provide valuable insights for future product development and marketing strategies. Future research can focus on identifying the key factors that influence students' preference for green tea. This may include studying the impact of taste, health benefits, packaging, marketing campaigns, and cultural influences on their decision-making process. Understanding these factors can assist in developing targeted interventions to further promote green tea consumption among students. Besides, a comparative study between green tea and other popular beverages among students can offer insight on the selling points of green tea. By



evaluating the taste preferences, perceived health benefits, and cultural associations of different beverages, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of why green tea stands out as a preferred choice among students.

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## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

NTAA wrote the introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion. Supervision by NAR is also in charge of adding information, editing, finalizing, and coordinating with the draft of the manuscript. SH, NANHZ, and IMA were responsible for assisting with the manuscript and providing technical support. The final manuscript was read and approved by all authors.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None declared.

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