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A Comparison of UK and Malaysian Customers’ Attitudes Towards Private Label Grocery Goods in a Major Supermarket: A Case Study
Abstract

This study identifies factors that most influence customers’ attitudes toward and intention to purchase private label grocery goods (PLGG) in a major international supermarket by comparing the views of customers in the United Kingdom and Malaysia, focusing on product packaging, price, place and promotion using a case study, survey approach. 209 customers completed a questionnaire, providing an overview of factors affecting their attitudes. The results revealed similar attitudes in both countries. Structural equation modelling produced a model identifying the factors that most influenced customers’ intention to buy PLGG. The results of this study offer organisations such as grocery stores and supermarkets, particular insights regarding intrinsic and extrinsic that most inform customers’ attitudes towards and intention to buy PLGG. These findings give this particular business sector insights into customers’ behaviour. This knowledge can be used to inform how they can optimally present their PLGG.

Key words : Private label, grocery goods, purchasing behaviour

Disclaimer

Data from this paper was presented at the … conference and an early version published on the conference website. We have since revised and updated it to include a more detailed review of the literature and in-depth statistical analysis to better present its results.

1. Introduction

Private label (PL) goods first appeared in the United Kingdom (UK) in the 1970s. At that time national brands dominated the market, driving price increases (Kahn and McAlister, 1997). Recent years, however, have witnessed a burgeoning of the PL market making it the biggest brand globally (Lincoln and Thomassen, 2008; Nielsen, 2018). The dominance of PL over branded goods might reasonably be expected in
times of austerity but according to Kantar Worldpanel figures, the increase in customers’ preference for PL goods is not restricted to times of recession but encompasses periods of economic recovery (Gray, 2014). The MSLGROUP in London has additionally reported a rise in PL sales of 1.32% in the grocery sector between 2011 and 2013 (Gray, 2014). The economic climate of the recent past offered retailers the opportunity to increase PL sales through the provision of low-priced, quality products (Eales, 2013).

Unlike the UK, in Asian and Far Eastern countries the PL market share is being less than 2% in Malaysia although this is slowly increasing (Prendergast, 2014). Nonetheless, there remains considerable potential for Malaysian retailers to increase this particular segment of the market. This study therefore, aims to investigate the factors most likely to influence these countries’ customers’ attitudes regarding PLGG to better understand the disparate and divergent PL market share and to ascertain which factors in particular inform customers’ intention to buy PL goods.

Although there is a substantial mass of published research on PL goods, little has been reported in the published academic literature which consequently lacks a direct comparison of customers in the West and the East where attitudes to PL goods might reasonably be expected to be at variance. Thus we sought to compare customers of a single supermarket operating in two different countries in two different continents. Consequently, this study explores how marketing mix (shelf-space, price, advertising and packaging) influence customers’ attitudes towards PLGG.

1. Literature Review

Private label (PL) goods, also identified as distributor, own, home and store brands, are products controlled, owned and sold by retailers (Herstein and Gamliel, 2006; Sethuraman and Cole, 1999) under their own names (Kotler et al., 1996). Sellers thus control these products, more particularly in respect of promoting, including dictating price, packaging, advertising and shelf placement of these goods (Chen, 2008).
PL first appeared in the late 1970s (Neidell, Boone and Cagley, 1984). These generic products were generally packaged in bland, black and white containers and tended to be placed on stores’ lowest-most shelves (Kumar, 2007). Retailers used such products to compete with nationally branded (NB) products by means of low price propositions as they were invariably viewed to be of inferior quality, generating low customer confidence. Consequently, they were generally dismissed by manufacturers, retailers and customers alike (Burck, 1979). This notwithstanding, the sales of PL products rose throughout the 1980s (Goldsmith et al., 2010). Underpinning this increasing popularity was the high-profit margin and the realisation that such goods offered greater profitability than branded equivalents. This in turn, encouraged retailers’ to improve the quality of PL products as a means of attracting more customers (Goldsmith et al., 2010).

In more recent times PL goods have become a priority for retailers. Liu and Wang (2008) have shown that they are viable, value-led alternatives to NB. Some retailers (eg Marks and Spencer®, John Lewis®) have replaced NB products, either totally or largely with their own label products. Strong price competition has driven retailers to change their selling strategies by offering premium PL products, promoting them as “value” ranges to differentiate them from and thus complete effectively with branded products. Sainsbury and Morrison for example, two of the UK’s largest supermarket chains, offer premium PL products, under their ‘Taste the difference’ and ‘M Signature’ brands respectively. Many other large supermarkets have followed suit.

PL goods have become popular with retailers for many other reasons. PL products allow retailers to differentiate themselves from local, national and international competitors and enable them to react instantly to customer trends. Hollensen (2014) stated that from a retailer’s perspective the PL business additionally plays a role in establishing an improved image with its customers. Offering premium PL goods has proved that an improvement in product quality directly increases customer loyalty (Hollensen, 2014).

Research in respect of the performance of PL goods in diverse countries, compared them to NB goods. Veloutsou (2004) noted that the PL product adoption
rate varies widely with European countries having the highest rate (Neilsen, 2013). Switzerland, the UK and Germany are the top three countries while Asian countries are invariably appreciably lower than their European counterparts (Neilsen, 2013). Veloutsou et al. (2004) additionally note that adoption rates vary throughout the world.

1.1. The Private Label Market in Malaysia

The Malaysian PL market is in its infancy compared to most European countries where it has been well established. Nielsen (2013) observes that no Asian country has a PL market share greater than 6%. The Malaysian market-share is even lower at 4% lower (Prendergast, 2014) although more recently it appears to be increasing owing to the global economic crisis that has driven Malaysians to be increasingly frugal (Kam, 2008). The relatively low uptake of PL goods in Malaysia imay be due to customers reticence to accept the quality of such products compared with branded equivalents. Nielsen’s (2005) study ranks Malaysia in the bottom ten countries globally where customers remain to be convinced that supermarkets’ PL goods represent a viable, value-laden alternative to branded equivalents.

1.2. The Private Label Market in the United Kingdom

In the last two decades PL goods sales in the UK represents aaround fifty percent of grocery sales (Steenkamp and Dekimpe, 1997). Dunne and Narasimhan (1999) observe that PL brands in the UK are increasing due to their adoption by strong retailers including Tesco, Sainsbury, The Co-operative, Asda and Morrison. Such acceptance of PL goods by UK customers is additionally due to residents’ perception that they represent better value than branded equivalents (Grewal, Levy and Lehmann, 2004). UK retailers strive to ensure their PL goods are accepted as different to those of their competitors (IRI, 2013). They aim to give their PL goods more ‘personality’ such that they are viewedas ‘brands' in their own right, while costing less than traditionally branded goods because customers are desire products that meets their needs while representing value for money (IRI, 2013; Group, 2012). Consequently, UK retailers have adopted less aggressive strategies in favour of advertising campaigns that seek to remind customers of the quality and value of their PL goods (Group, 2011; Group, 2012).
The recent global financial crisis and the increasing cost of living presented retailers such as Tesco, Carrefour, Aeon and Giant with an opportunity to promote their own particular PL products. These world-wide conditions have also generated a demand for PL goods among Malaysian customers. Retailers emphasise value of such good, promoting PL products as being cheaper but of equivalent quality to branded products. Retailers have continued to produce and promote their own PL goods even in the face of falling sales in an attempt to gain a bigger share of the market. Tesco for example, introduced its “Tesco Loves Baby” brand in the mid 2000’s to attract young mothers.

1.3. Customers’ Attitude

A number of definitions of attitude are currently recognised. In marketing terms Solomon’s (2010) definition regards it as a general evaluation that is established regarding a given product over a period of time. Schiffman and Kanuk (1995) define it as a learned predisposition whereby customers behave in a consistent way towards an object. Attitudes reflect the feelings we have regarding an object or product (East, 1997). Objects need not be material goods; services, brands, advertisements, retailers or other people can and do elicit similar emotional responses. Thus the meaning of attitude can represent the summary evaluation of an object (Schiffman and KANUK, 1995).

Customer attitude has been defined as a composite of customer’s beliefs, feelings and behavioural intentions toward an object, service, brand, advertisement or retailer (Perner, 2010). Customers’ attitudes to goods can potentially influence their purchasing behaviour as attitude is one of a number of criteria that contribute collectively in the decision-making, purchasing process (Kinnear and Taylor, 1996). Such knowledge inspires marketers to explore and better understand the factors that hold sway over customers’ attitudes towards goods or products. Wilkie (1994) however, contends that because attitude is an abstract concept, customers’ attitudes cannot be fully understood through direct observation alone. Several models have
nevertheless been developed to help in the identification of attitudinal factors that influence specific customer behaviour (Peter, Olson and Grunert, 1999).

How customers evaluate concepts, objects, people or events influences their attitude towards them. Sallam and Wahid (2012) note that customers’ attitudes are popular topics of study for social psychologists and marketers as they determine how a customer feels towards an object or product. In the current study, the ABC model of attitudes (also known as the tripartite, three-component model or tricomponent attitude model) (Ellis, 1991) is used as the basis for exploring customers’ attitudes to private label goods. ‘A’ denotes customers’ affect, ‘B’ their behaviour and ‘C’ their cognition (Fazio and Olson, 2007; Lin, 2010; Ellis, 1991). Although these factors are described and considered individually they, can and, do impact each other, an observation explained by the Hierarchy of Effects model which was developed by Lewis in 1900 (as cited in Wijaya, 2015). The ABC model explains how attitude is formed. It has been summarised by Solomon (2010) into three distinct hierarchies of low involvement, standard learning and experiential.

1.4. The ABC Model of Attitudes

Ellis (1991) advances human attitudes to be shaped by affect, behaviour and cognition. This (A,B,C) model emphasises the interrelationship between knowing, feeling and doing. A customer’s attitude towards a product or service cannot be determined by identifying their beliefs about it in isolation because they lack sufficient information by which to make any meaningful judgement. The three components model reveals a customer’s motivation and consumption as well what they know, feel and normally do, collectively determines their attitude to a product or service (Solomon et al., 2013).

A challenge in using the ABC model is the measurement of its three constituent components. Many measurement tools have been designed to capture information regarding attitude, including the use of physiological cues (Breckler and Wiggins, 1989). Another method of measuring attitude is network mapping or the use of word cues to measure attitudes towards specific products (Shavelson and Stanton, 1975). The latter methods are employed in the current study.
1.1.1. Affect

Affect is defined as the emotional reaction or opinion of an individual towards an object. It can be expressed as anger, happiness or sadness. According to Solomon (2010) affect reveals a customer’s feelings about the object at which it is directed. Egan (2007) asserts that any emotion leading to an intention to exhibit a behaviour, such as a reaction to a brand, and cognition of an object are affect components. An example of capturing the affect component of a customer is to capture the direct or global assessment that the customer attaches to an object through the use of keywords such as “favourable” or “unfavourable”, “good” or “bad”. As human emotion is a prime determinant of subjective well-being, emotion therefore plays a significant role in many human activities. Individuals who are imprecise in expressing their feelings often confuse affect and cognition, which leads to a reliance on feelings to initiate an action (Berger, 2002).

In our study, emotion or the opinion of customers (derived from shopping experiences while purchasing PLGG) represent the affect component.

1.1.2. Behaviour

The behaviour of a person refers to his or her response resulting from exposure to an object. Solomon (2011) states that behaviour is the response of customers resulting from affect and cognition, implying intention. Behaviour is therefore measurable. It is the easiest to identify of the three components of the ABC model because it consists of observable responses and actions (Berger, 2002). An appropriate behaviour has to be in place, altered or diminished in order to realise a particular goal. Some behaviour is harder to develop or change because it derives from cultural values (Oltedal et al., 2004). Once a person’s behaviour is identified it becomes clearer what actions need to be taken or is within that person’s to realise achieve a desired outcome.

1.1.3. Cognition

Cognition has been defined as the mental activity that reflects an individual's knowledge, beliefs or thoughts towards aspects of their world (Barry and Howard, 1990). Attributes attached to a product through direct experience or information related
to it is collected using a variety of sources. The perception of attributes attached to a given product will commonly take the form of beliefs about that product. The belief of an individual will trigger specific behaviour that will in turn, lead to specific outcomes. This way of thinking represents the cognition component of affect. This component is used to interpret an individual's understanding of a product (Norman, 2004). It is represented by customers' beliefs on the quality of products.

1.1.4. Hierarchies of Effects

The extent to which and the manner in which ABC components of attitude impact each other is determined by context. Three hierarchies of effects are recognised (Solomon, 2011), information processing, behavioural learning processes and hedonic consumption. Hierarchies of effects represent three components working collectively to inform the formation of human attitudes. Such a concept can be used to differentiate the degree to which a person is involved or motivated towards a product. Barry and Howard (1990) have determined that hierarchical processes help predict human behaviour.

1.1.5. The Standard Learning Hierarchy

The standard learning hierarchy assumes that customers conduct their own research to inform their own beliefs about any product they wish to purchase, will often respond emotionally, and attach feelings to the product. The feelings will then determine and trigger the customer’s behaviour. This hierarchy approach is apparent in situations of high level of customer involvement in the purchase process (Solomon, 2011).

1.1.6. The Low-Involvement Hierarchy

In the low-involvement hierarchy, customers are assumed to have a relatively low involvement with the purchase. Customers decisions are cognition rather than emotion based. They start with a neutral attitude towards all available brands. With limited knowledge, customers purchase the product; only later do they form an evaluation of the product. The customer's feeling towards the product are determined by behavioural learning, which is shaped by previous good or bad experiences of it or similar product. This approach is not suitable for purchases that are expensive or life-
changing. Customers will normally adopt this hierarchy when they are not motivated to process all available information related to a product (Solomon, 2011).

1.1.7. The Experiential Hierarchy

The experiential hierarchy states that customers are influenced to make a purchase based on their feeling regarding an object. The cognition stage comes into play following a purchase and tends to reinforces the initial emotional response (i.e. affect). This hierarchy highlights that intangible product attributes such as packaging design, brand labels, advertisements and the physical environment at the point of purchase, shapes customers’ attitude towards a brand or product (Solomon, 2011).

In the current study, grocery goods are the subject of study as they are cheap and their purchase does not represent a life-changing decision. In this situation, the low-involvement hierarchy is what customers usually assume, followed by the experiential hierarchy that more readily explains customers’ impulse purchasing. The standard learning hierarchy is less likely to come into play because customers seldom allocate too much effort when collecting information on grocery goods.

2. Attitude to Private Label Goods

PL attitude has been defined as responding positively or negatively to a product, purchase or self-evaluation (Burton et al., 1998). Chaniotakis et al. (2009) have observed that attitude has a major role in influencing customers’ intention to purchase PL products. Consequently, it is suggested that retailers attempt to influence customers to form positive attitudes.

PL products are now a viable alternative choice for customers rather than merely a cheap brand to choose in challenging, economic times (Walker, 2006). Shoppers now purchase their preferred brands in supermarket-style branded packaging (Canadean, 2013). Furthermore, Canadean (2013) has shown that 44 percent of UK purchasers believe NB and PL goods to be made in the same factory but marketed with different wrapping and packaging. Moreover, UK customers’ attitudes towards PL appear have be improving as 70% now believe that PL canned foods are better or similar to NB (Canadean, 2013). There are however, studies that suggest PL products still portray a less favourable image than NB goods (Burt, 2000;
Grewal et al., 1998). Many remain sceptical of PL products as they perceive them to be of inferior quality to branded goods (Bettman, 1974). If customers have had a negative experience of PL products in one particular store they tend to assume the same of other PL products in other stores although Gordon (1994) found that customers continue to buy PL products.

3. Performance Management

Whilst awareness of and implementation of effective marketing measures contribute to the success of any commercial venture, performance management is a vital additional necessity (Carpi, Douglas and Gascon, 2017). Aligning the two has the potential to radically improve a venture’s success (Lee et al., 2016). Formal supply chain risk management for example has been show to significantly benefit South African retailers in the grocery industry (Simba et al., 2017) as has tactical planning elsewhere (Dreyer et al., 2018; Vu, 2016).

Thus, careful selection, measurement and monitoring of relevant metrics is key to optimising growth and economic benefit to both the grocery industry and customers. Where management and staff work closely to identify and act on strengths and weaknesses identified by appropriate performance management measures and processes, is likely to optimise not only working relationships but increase efficiency withing the gorocery and other industries (Carpi, Douglas and Gascon, 2017; Forslund, 2015; Cohanier, 2014). The identification and utilisation of customer factors that influence customer choice in conjunction with performance management measures will enable individual retailers to maximise efficiency within the organisation to build on strengths, address weaknesses and offer custmers quality products and value.

4. Study Objectives

This study has three specific objectives in pursuance of its aim to explore the relationship between identified factors (packaging, price, shelf-space and advertising) and customers’ attitudes to PLGG and their intention to buy such goods. Therefore, the objectives are expressly to …

a) Identify factors affecting customers’ attitudes towards PLGG
b) Identify similarities and differences in factors affecting positive customer attitude in the UK and Malaysian

c) investigate the extent to which each factor positively influences customers’ intention to buy PLGG.

5. Study Questions and Hypotheses

One principle research question and two hypotheses are posed in this study. The research question is :-

Which factors most influence customers’ intention to buy PLGG?

The two hypotheses to be tested are …

H1 There are differences between the UK and Malaysian customers regarding their intention to purchase PLGG, and

H2 There are differences between the UK and Malaysian regarding each of the six factors known to influence customers’ attitudes to PLGG

6. Theoretical Framework

According to Ajzen’s (1985) theory of planned behaviour (TPB) attitude is a principal determinant of human behaviour. As the current study seeks to examine and identify factors that individually and collectively influence customers’ intention to by PLGG, it combines measures of known marketing factors (packaging, price, advertising, retailer’s brand image, product labelling and shelf-space) with measures of attitude as described by the TPB model. The resulting conceptual model illustrated in Error! Reference source not found.1.
7. Methods
8. Questionnaire

A questionnaire consisting of two major sections was devised. The first collected subjects’ demographic data. The second consisted of five items in six subsections. Each subsection addressed factors that are known to influence customers’ attitudes to retail products (price, packaging, advertising, shelf placement, product labelling and retailer brand image). Each item was expressed as a closed question in the form, “Do you agree that … factor … is the only factor you take into account when purchasing a grocery product”. Participants’ responses were recorded on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 7 (completely agree).

Table 1 reports demographic statistics of the subjects in this study.
Place Table 1 here.
9. Statistical Testing

Statistical analysis proceeded in four parts. Mean values were calculated from the responses to each of the five items in each of the six categories of questions addressing the factors that influence customers' attitudes towards PLGG. Aggregate scores for each of the six categories were used to compare the two study populations (UK vs Malaysia) through Student's t-testing. Correlation coefficients were calculated to examine for possible relationships between factors. Alpha coefficients were calculated for scores to estimate internal consistency and reliability. Hypothesis testing was conducted by means of structural equation modelling (SEM), an advanced approach to testing hypothesized relationships among measured and latent variables. All calculations and testing was performed using SPSS (v25). SEM was undertaken using AMOS, a statistical analysis program used in conjunction with SPSS (v 25) to conduct multivariate analysis (Arbuckle, 2013).

10. Results

The populations in UK and Malaysia were similar in respect of age and sex distribution with the majority of participants being female and under the age of 35 years (Table 1). A greater proportion of the Malaysian participants however earned less than £30,000.00 per year (81.5 % vs 75.0 %).

Table 2 gives means, standard deviations and the results of t-tests for differences in the mean scores of study constructs between the UK and Malaysian samples. The mean score of 'price' for the UK sample is statistically, significantly lower than that for the Malaysian sample but barely so. There are no significant differences between the mean scores of the remaining six constructs (i.e. packaging, advertising, shelf space, labelling and brand image) and intention to purchase. The similarities of both populations with respect to these factors justifies combining the results for much of the analysis of this dataset.
Place Table 2 here.
Table 3 reports Pearson correlations between the observed constructs in this study. There were weak but statistically significant correlations between price, packaging, advertising, shelf space, labelling, brand image and intention to buy. There was a weak but statistically significant correlation between advertising and intention to buy in the UK population. This was similar in the Malaysian population except that there was a weakly positive, statistically significant correlation was observed between labelling and intention to buy. Both these results were reflected in an analysis of the combined dataset.
Place Table 3 here.
Cronbach’s (1951) alpha (α) coefficients were calculated to assess internal consistency and reliability of the explored items (Table 4). Alpha coefficients of the constructs ranged from 0.707 to 0.851, exceeding the cut-off value of 0.70 recommended by (Nunnally, 1978). This indicates that the inventory yielded satisfactory reliability with the data collected in both the UK and Malaysian settings.
Place Table 4 here.
Table 5 displays the results of hypothesis testing and includes standardised regression coefficients with their corresponding p-values. In the UK sample, there is a significant, negative relationship between advertising and intentional to purchase ($\beta = -0.327$, $p = 0.005$). In the Malaysian sample, there is a significant, positive relationship between labelling and intentional to purchase ($\beta = -0.186$, $p = 0.039$). The total sample revealed a statistically significant, negative relationship between advertising and intentional to purchase ($\beta = -0.216$, $p = 0.008$); there is a significant, positive relationship between labelling and intentional to purchase ($\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.049$). Other relationships however, were not statistically significant.

From a statistical perspective these results suggest that relationships do exist in the sample but cannot readily be extrapolated to the whole population. Additionally, considering the absolute value of the standardised regression coefficients, advertising is the most important factor affecting customer intention to purchase in the UK sample; labelling is the most contributory factor in the Malaysian sample and advertising the most contributory factor in the total sample. Finally, structural equation modelling was employed to derived models from the study data. These are presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3. The implications of the research findings are discussed in the next section.

Place Table 5 here.
Place Figure 2 here.

Place Figure 3 here
Place Figure 4 here.
11. Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that affect customers’ attitude toward PLGG in Tesco’s grocery products. A second objective was to ascertain if UK and Malaysian customers had similar or different attitudes towards PLGG. Relevant factors were identified from a review of the literature. The results of this study show that despite there being a difference in income between the two populations they have similar perspectives and attitudes regarding the factors that are known to influence customers’ attitudes towards PLGG. This is perhaps surprising given the obvious cultural, culinary and other differences between them (Toth, 2019). However, it does echo the somewhat counter-intuitive observation that the public’s interest in purchasing non-branded goods is not limited to times of significant economic austerity (Gray, 2014). The current study suggests that economic status does not significantly influence customers’ attitude towards PLGG.

Published research has show that a myriad factors can potentially impact customers’ attitude towards goods. Classically, the marketing mix has been cited as a ‘working package’ of terms by which to conceptualise the factors that influence customers’ inclination to buy products. In the West, there is a ready acceptance that branded goods represent quality if not value (Shafiq, Raza and Zia-ur-Rehman, 2011) whereas in the East there is a perception that customers are more discriminating, demanding greater knowledge of what the products offers them (Anholt, 2000). Furthermore, it is increasingly clear that businesses need to be aware of factors beyond marketing mix if they are to successfully provide their customer with goods they consider desirable. For example, it has been shown that younger customers are more likely than older customers to succumb to impulse purchasing and more likely to return goods if they do not meet their expectations or requirements (Kamaruddin and Kamaruddin, 2009).

The elements that impact customers’ purchasing behaviour can be broadly considered in terms of internal and external factors. Internal factors include those that appeal to customers’ wants and needs (Fung, Chong and Wang, 2004). A number of
external factors have also been shown to be particularly important in customers’ decision to purchase (Keller, 2001; Keller, Parameswaran and Jacob, 2011). External factors more closely align the classical marketing mix factors.

While there has been significant, more recent interest in exploring and delineating which factors most impact customers’ purchasing behaviour with respect to organic products (Kavaliauske and Ubartaite, 2014), fast food (Xiao, Yang and Iqbal, 2019) and luxury brands (Park, Rabolt and Sook Jeon, 2008) amongst others, the literature currently lacks an evaluation of customers’ attitudes towards PLGG and an assessment of the marketing mix factors that most influence their intention to purchase them. This study has shown that UK customers are less likely to purchase PLGG if those products are advertised whereas customers in Malaysia are more likely to purchase the same types of goods if they are attractively and informatively labelled. The negative effect of advertising on the likelihood of purchasing extended to the two populations combined and was therefore likely to be particularly powerful.

It is difficult to offer explanations for this observation. It may be that customers are reluctant to purchase goods that require promotion by advertising. The food and consumables industry has traditionally not attracted celebrity endorsement to the extent that other product and service industries have. It may be that such endorsements may improve the public’s view of PLGG and change their purchasing behaviour. It may also be that excessive advertising of PL goods may diminish their perceived value in the eyes of potential customers. In order to maximise sales of PLGG in both Eastern and Western countries, supermarkets should be cognisant of both the beneficial and potentially adverse impact of advertising. The need to provide adequate information on attractive labels is particularly important.

The results of this study contribute to a better understanding of customers’ attitudes to PLGG. The retail and other industries can benefit from the results of this study by implementing the findings in retail stores. The results moreover help supermarket managers to better understand the importance and relationships of the factors that most influence customers’ attitudes to certain products and how effective
they are. The findings of this study are likely therefore to be used to help improve sales of PL products.

PL product sales continue to increase despite economic growth. The UK is now one of the largest and most successful of PL goods market. Well known and high profile retailers are increasingly investing in Malaysia and PL products are increasingly available and popular in South Eastern Asian markets. As stakeholders continue to gain insights into the reasons for the UK’s PL market success and the current contrasting situation in Malaysia, PL goods’ sales will likely increase in both countries.

1.5. Limitations and Strengths

A limitation of this research is its sample size in that the results that may not be generalisable to all populations. This is supported by the statistical analysis of the gathered data. The UK limb of the study was conducted in a single, large Scottish city. Most respondents therefore were Scottish whereas most Malaysian respondents were of Chinese. Although these do not represent the full range of nationalities and cultures of either country (both of which are ethnically diverse) the results of the current study nevertheless provide insights in the attitudes and behaviours of two disparate populations. Additionally, PLGG is a broad definition of a variety of products. The findings of this study provide a general overview of PLGG; other products might have a different outcome.

While this study does have limitations, the statistical analysis of the items comprising the questionnaire shows them to have acceptable reliability and so the results are meaningful in the populations studied. More research is now required to confirm or challenge these results with a larger dataset. Further research is now also required to examine the public’s view of products other than grocery goods. Research such as the current study, needs also to be conducted on similar populations in times of economic growth as well as austerity to establish the extent to which economic factors influence customers' purchasing behaviour.
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