THE DUAL EFFECT OF FEAR OF PANDEMIC ON CONSUMERS (SATISFACTION AND REPURCHASE INTENTION) FOR ELECTRICAL HOME APPLIANCES DURING COVID-19

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Abstract: Electrical Home Appliances (EHA) are necessary for modern life. Some of these items are costly. Customer needs cognitive decision before purchasing. COVID-19 and its impact on humanity are disastrous and devastating (lockdown, social distance, joblessness, low/no income, death, and long health crisis). Like other businesses, EHA purchases and their usage have been affected. The study investigated customer satisfaction and the repurchase intention of EHA. The study was conducted in Malaysia and data were collected from 400 Malaysians using structured questions through social media and emails. Collected data were analysed with PLS-SEM (SmartPLSv.3). The study found that product quality, customer perceived value, and social media usage were significant with customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction and fear of the pandemic were also influential on repurchase intention. Besides, customer satisfaction is mediated fully with repurchase intention. Moreover, the contributory part is to investigate the moderating effect of fear of the pandemic on the relationship between satisfaction and repurchase intention was significant. Fear of the pandemic was a successful exogenous and interaction construct. The study used two prominent theories to support the framework and the relationships: Stimulus Organism Response theory and Perceived Risk Theory were successfully buttressed by current findings. These findings were very insightful for practitioners and knowledge-builders.

Keywords: COVID-19, customer satisfaction, electrical home appliances, fear of pandemic, repurchase intention.

Introduction

Household management in this modern era is an integral part of family life and no one can ignore household management (Churaman, 1974). Electrical household appliances, namely consumer durables, such as air conditioners, fans, fridges, television, and washing machine (Kaur & Chadha, 2014), are widely used in households for comfort and efficiency. Many of these items are costly (Bayus 1992) and last long unless additional service or replacement is required (Sakthivel & Nachimuthu, 2019). Customers need to be highly involved in purchasing and are more likely to search for and be better informed about these appliances than non-durable goods/items (Sweeney *et al.* 1997). Their study also mentioned that in the case of costly purchases, customers are more likely to make rational decisions and are relatively straightforward in responding to questions about this type of product (Sweeney *et al.,* 1997).

This market is competitive; companies face intense competition due to more demanding customers, technological changes, easy access to this market for new competitors and a globalised market (Ehsani & Ehsani, 2015). Customers are informative and knowledgeable about products, price, quality, and associated services and are concerned, vigilant, and alert before and during purchase decisions (Uzir *et al.,* 2020). In purchasing costly items, customers take suggestions from their friends and family (Surya & Maala, 2018). Besides, customers expect maximum benefit and service from a

unique but branded product (Khamis & Ab Rashid, 2018) at a minimum price (Hamzah & Shamsudin, 2020). They consider price and quality extensively while purchasing these costly appliances (Srivastava & Sharma, 2013). Thus, the purchase decision is a significant factor in marketing and consumer behaviour (Rachmawati *et al.,* 2019). Purchase intention is a critical aspect of customer cognitive behaviour (Martins *et al.,* 2019) and the physiological act of purchasing a commodity (Lin and Lu, 2010), whereas repurchase intention is the post-behaviour of purchase, reflecting an actual purchase (Hsu & Lin, 2015).

Similarly, a consumer with high repurchase intention is considered loyal to a brand (Foroudi *et al.* 2018) mentioned that companies acquire and maintain new consumers and convert them into repeat consumers for continual revenue and profit. Therefore, scholars in marketing have emphasised consumer repurchase intention (Shin *et al.,* 2013). Aiming at the conversion process of a consumer to a loyal customer, this study investigates how better-quality electrical household appliances with high service, cost-benefit assessment of these items, and knowledge and information from social media influence buyer loyalty or repurchase interest in a particular brand.

Our lovely world has suffered from the invasion of COVID-19 since December 2019. Li *et al.* (2021) mentioned that COVID-19 had disrupted human lives, businesses and the overall economy worldwide as an unprecedented global public health emergency. Nicola *et al.* (2020) mentioned that this pandemic caused a great deal of fear of the financial crisis recession, risks to physical and mental well-being, and even death (Zeilig *et al.,* 2020). The impact is conspicuous in people's daily lives when they lose their routines (Kim *et al.,* 2021).

WHO (2020) reported that COVID-19 spread through human interaction. Therefore, many countries imposed prohibitions on public gatherings, confirming social distancing, staying at home, and business lockdowns (O'Connor *et al.,* 2021). Many cities worldwide faced partial or full lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020 (Dirsehan & Cankat, 2021). Therefore, consumers lost their income due to either less salary, low income or no income. Thus, the repurchasing of home appliances was reduced drastically. Companies also lost their revenue and profit. A similar effect was observed in the Malaysian economy-business lockdown, job loss, less salary, social distance, movement control, and staying home since March 2020. The study extended its focus on the fear of pandemics such as COVID-19 interrupted repurchase intention in electrical appliances.

This study conceptualised these multiple relationships (perceived quality, perceived value, social media usage, customer satisfaction, repurchase intention and fear of pandemic) in the light of two theoretical foundations for better understanding: Stimulus, Organism and Response (S-O-R) theory and Perceived Risk Theory (PRT). Product quality, quality of service, customer perceived value and social media were considered marketing cues or stimuli influencing repurchase intention by ensuring usage satisfaction (O). Similarly, the theory of perceived risk explains how consumers are afraid of COVID-19 and are suffering from it. Foroudi *et al.* (2021) stated the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on consumer behaviour in purchasing products or services during this critical time and also portrayed the mental states: Of consumers' beliefs, emotions, and consequently future desires.

Customers' interaction with technology and social media has hastened this challenge tougher (Hamzah & Shamsudin, 2020; Uzir *et al.*, 2021). Another significant issue was unnoticed that fake news and false news in social media regarding COVID-19 and rumours on Internet platforms influence consumer behaviour. This study attempted to investigate the impact of marketing stimuli such as perceived quality, customer value and the role of social media on customer satisfaction and onward satisfaction on repurchase intention having a fear of being infected and suffering from it. This study

focused on these relationships and theoretical gaps in the research questions and established the expected answers to them: (a) What effects do product quality, quality of service, customer perceived value, and social media users make on customer satisfaction? (b) To what level of fear of the pandemic influence repurchase intention? and (c) What mediating effect does customer satisfaction have on the marketing stimuli and repurchase intention?

Based on the research questions, the study also developed the research objectives to proceed with the research: (i) To investigate the effect of product quality, quality of service, customer perceived value, and social media users make on customer satisfaction, (ii) To examine the direct effect and moderating effect of fear of the pandemic on repurchase intention, (iii) To measure the mediating effect of customer satisfaction on the marketing stimuli and repurchase intention.

This current study proceeded in discussing the literature review (constructs, relationships), theoretical foundation, and developing a conceptual framework. The latter entailed the methods and materials of the study, data analysis and discussion. The study concluded with the recommendation, implications, limitations and future direction.

In the literature review section, various constructs and their relationships explained the theoretical background, hypotheses development and placed proposed conceptual framework were discussed.

Repurchase Intention

In simple meaning, consumers' decision to buy a product again is the repurchase intention (Shim *et al.,* 2001; Hellier *et al.*, 2003). The event wherein a consumer repeatedly purchases a product and may decide to buy shortly is repurchase intention (Kukar-Kinney *et al.*, 2009). From a theoretical view, Wu *et al.* (2014) defined repurchase intention as "the consumer subjective' likelihood re-patronising a company or brand".

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction constructs have been used in the research of psychology, economics, business, marketing, housing, and tourism (Jiang *et al.,* 2017) and occupy a central role in marketing thoughts and practice (Nunkoo *et al,.* 2020). As the role of a customer in business and marketing plans and strategies is very significant, Marshal, the famous retailer, mentioned the customer as king (Uzir *et al.,* 2021d). Therefore, satisfaction is a priority for the management to serve customers' requirements and is also a strategic imperative for all competitive businesses to survive in the market (Yi & Nataraajan, 2018).

COVID-19 and Fear of the Pandemic

COVID-19 is a non-uncommon and a "global shock" (Papadopoulos *et al.,* 2020). The world has maintained social distancing and quarantine since March 2020 (Hassan *et al.,* 2022). Nicola *et al.* (2020) mentioned that this pandemic caused great fear of the financial crisis recession. The economic effect of the COVID-19 pandemic poses more risks to physical and mental well-being, with potentially severe implications for psychological health (Zeilig *et al.,* 2020). With high levels of fear, individuals may not think clearly and rationally when reacting to COVID-19. Recently, the well-being phenomenon has become a way of life (Han & Hyun, 2019). Since the outbreak of COVID-19, various precautionary measures, such as restrictions regarding movement and social isolation, have been implemented to cope with COVID-19 (van de Wetering *et al.,* 2022). However, these new measures have also induced individual well-being challenges (Tuzovic & Kabadayi, 2020).

Product Quality

A product is a physical object which satisfies an individual's need (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Product quality means the attributes and characteristics of a product and services associated with it (Cho *et al.*, 2019), "fitness for

use" or "conformance to requirement" as per customer expectation (Russell & Taylor, 2006), "meeting customers' requirements (Crosby & Stephens, 1987). Product quality is a vital factor for companies and their growth (Santouridis & Trivellas, 2010) and determines the profitability and success of a company (Aaker & Jacobson, 1994). For electrical home appliances, product quality is flawlessness, durability, appearance and distinctiveness dimensions (Uddin, 2013), the visual appearance of a product such as design and outlook features (Ricardo, 2008), the functionality, energy-saving, ease of use, speed, and uninterrupted operations (Uzir *et al.,* 2020), and the safety to use (Liu *et al.,* 2021). These features attract customers and satisfy them. Thus, product quality is vital in determining consumer behaviour in marketing and consumer studies.

Quality of Service

Quality of service means the structure of services associated with physical products. The study adopted the view of Rigopoulou *et al.* (2008) regarding the quality of service related to physical and electrical items in two aspects: delivery service quality and installation service quality. In electrical home appliances, delivery and installation services are vital because large TV, washing machine, air conditioners and large fridge (deep fridges) require these services. Omar *et al.* (2021) and Blut (2016) poised the significance of quality of service in consumer-cantered business firms because customers evaluate the service associated with this product. Thus, quality of service refers to "the quality level of products and services provided to customers and their service satisfaction" (Kim 2021). Chen *et al.* (2019) mentioned that the quality of service is reflected through consumers' overall appraisal of a company's efforts. Higher quality of service has arguably become the most important consumer trend (Farooq *et al.,* 2018).

Customer Perceived Value

Dirsehan and Cankat (2021) mentioned that customers always compare their expectations to the perceived value based on what they obtained. The perceived value perspective primarily focuses on providing relational benefits through value-inducing features, and repurchase decisions depend on perceived value and cost (Wu *et al.,* 2014). Consumers' perceived value is the core construct and foundation in a relational exchange, and is the perception of expected gains and losses in the repurchase process and plays an important role in exchange or transaction (Holbrook 1994). Zeithaml (1988) defined consumer perceived value as "the overall assessment trade-off of the salient sacrifice/give and benefits/get components". Graciola *et al*. (2018) argued that customer-perceived value means 'low price' to some customers, 'benefits' to others, and other customers consider the ratio between their spending to get a product and the benefits or quality they receive from it. Zielke (2011) mentioned that customers would show intention if their distress and anger were reduced by value.

Social Media Usage

Social media refer to "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking" (Heffner, 2016). Social media is operated through the Internet. Thus, the Internet profoundly impacts marketing (Shin *et al*., 2013). Companies reach customers online in many ways (Wu *et al*., 2014). Social media is an invisible connector between vendors and customers (Arora *et al.,* 2019). Therefore, social media easily reach potential customers with offerings, demonstrate product features and user benefits, and draw them. According to a survey, social media are growing in number and increasing their users worldwide. Social media is a large platform for interacting with each other.

According to Schwartz-Chassidim *et al.* (2020), users utilise Facebook social media and the social network for sharing messages, comments, news, information, experiences and like-dislike and recommendation. Sometimes negative news and fake in social media may cause harm to the business. Therefore, Zhang

et al. (2019) warned that this negative message in social media might cause a risk of losing prospective customers. Thus, Alshallaqi *et al.* (2022) mentioned that technology like social media has become resistant. Social media usage has been used as a moderating construct (Uzir *et al.*, 2019; Al Halbusi *et al.,* 2022) and mediating variable (Nam, 2021). In this study, social-mediated is used as a predictor.

Theoretical Foundation

This study's objectives were framed under the light of two behavioural theories: Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) theory and Perceived Risk Theory (PRT).

Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model and Perceived Risk Theory (PRT)

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) approached and developed the S-O-R paradigm as a theoretical ground which connects three aspects of the human decision-action plan: The stimulus, organism, and response. It is widely used in other behaviourism disciplines, e.g. marketing and consumer behaviour (Moore 1996). This study used the perceived quality (both product and service), perceived value and social media usage as marketing stimuli which drive satisfaction or dissatisfaction (as an organism in the human mind or brain). This internal proceeding (in the state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction) leads to an action or reaction (agree or disagree with the cues) as a response.

Perceived risk is a significant issue for academic study (Zhang & Yu, 2020), which indicates the uncertainty of loss or gain in a particular relationship or transaction (Featherman & Pavlou, 2003). As perceived risk influences consumer behaviour, many scholars used PRT in marketing and consumer studies (Wei *et al.,* 2018). This risk assumption has become popular in the modern, digital, and information age (Zhang & Yu, 2020). Thus, customers attempt to reduce purchasing risk and use the risk of electrical home appliances.

Relationships and Hypotheses
Product Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Customers need a solution to their problem (demand), and a product is that solution (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001). Like other products, electrical home appliances also solve customers' problems by quality (product performance and product service). Thus, the company needs to understand, predict and realise customer requirements (Gerdt *et al.,* 2019; Zhang *et al.,* 2019). Thus, the following statement was formulated:

H1: The product quality of electrical home appliances will influence customer satisfaction.

Quality of Service and Customer Satisfaction

Quality of service associated with a physical product is correlated with customer satisfaction (Rigopoulou *et al.,* 2008), especially in electrical home appliances (Uzir *et al.,* 2020). Kim (2021) linked product quality and services provided to customers with their satisfaction. Delivery service is significant to attract customers. Thus, delivery personnel's service influences customer satisfaction (Kim 2021; Uzir *et al.,* 2021a). Large TV, air conditioners, fridge, washing machines and ceiling fans require setting up in the house (installation). Thus, the following argument is poised:

H2: Quality of service in electrical home appliances will influence customer satisfaction.

Customer Perceived Value and Customer Satisfaction

Generally, customers want value for their money (Campbell & Stanley, 2015). Considering customers' buying behaviour, Chicu *et al.* (2019) and Hirata (2019) mentioned that customers are rapturous. If the customers realise that from a particular purchase, they receive more benefits than they pay, they will surely be satisfied with the product (Murali *et al.,* 2016). Thus, considering the overall argument, the following hypothesis is formed:

H3: Customer perceived value for electrical home appliances will influence customer satisfaction.

Social Media Usage and Customer Satisfaction

Customers use social media for their entertainment and information. Schwartz-Chassidim *et al.* (2020) mention that customer shares their like-dislikes through social media. Tandon *et al.* (2021) explored the negative phenomena linked with social media usage. Regular and social media are overloaded with news and messages about COVID-19 and its effect on humans (Amin, 2020). Considering this discussion, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H4: Social media usage will influence positive customer satisfaction.

Fear of Pandemic and Repurchase Intention

Fear is a psychological statement of a human being (Amin, 2020), whereas the intention to do something is another state of mind (Wu *et al.,* 2014). Fear derives from uncertainty, risk or un-comfortability (Mukherjee & Manna 2021). Amin (2020) stated that COVID-19 is a frightening time for all, and a fear of being infected with COVID-19 distorts mental reactions to regular experiences and causes unpredictable behaviour. Therefore, based on this above discussion, the study formulated the following hypothesis:

H5: Fear of the pandemic (COVID-19) will negatively influence customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction and Repurchase Intention

Pee *et al.* (2018) stated that buyers assess the perceived quality and perceived value and once they feel contended, they intend to buy next time. This argument was supported by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985), who commented that satisfaction increases willingness to purchase again (Huré *et al.*, 2017; Groß, 2018). In support, prior studies have shown that satisfaction is positively related to repurchase intention (e.g., (Wen *et al.,*

2011; Lankton & McKnight 2012). Javed and Wu (2020) and Ho and Chung (2020) showed that the repurchase intention of a consumer is derived from the contentedness of buyers of a particular firm. Thus, the study formulated the following hypothesis:

H6: Customer satisfaction will positively influence repurchase intention.

Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

Shin *et al.* (2013) examined the mediating role of customer satisfaction on customer retention. As repurchase intention is attitudinal loyalty of the loyalty model (Ali ,2019; Omar *et al.,* 2021), it is a prior assessment of the act of buying (Erciş *et al.* 2012). Omar *et al.* (2021) presented satisfaction as a mediator with repurchase intention. Thus, the study formulated the following hypotheses:

$H7_{a, b, c}$: Marketing cues (product quality, quality of service, and customer perceived value) indirectly affect repurchase intention through customer satisfaction.

The Moderating Role of Fear of Pandemic

The emergence of this pandemic (Huang *et al.*, 2020; Guan *et al.,* 2020) enhances fear among people and creates stigma among them (Lin 2020). Ahorsu *et al.* (2020) also illustrated that with high levels of fear, an individual is disturbed in thinking clearly and rationally; they react to this disease. On the other hand, people free from fear can decide the right thing and act accordingly. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formed:

H8: The level (degree) of fear of the pandemic influence the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention in electrical home appliances during the pandemic.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

This section presented the proposed conceptual framework. Product quality, quality of service, customer perceived value and social media

usage will influence customer satisfaction in the electrical home appliance business. Similarly, satisfied customers will be influenced to intend to repurchase while there is less or no fear of this pandemic.

These assumptions were conceptualised through two established theories, the theory S-O-R and the PRT theory. Figure 1 shows the interrelationships among the constructs.

Methodology

Measurements

In this study, seven constructs were fixed in the conceptual model, of which all constructed were adapted from past literature with slight modifications to suit the context of the study (Seale, 2004).

The measurement of the constructs adapted from past studies e.g. Customer Perceived value: Sekaran and Bougie (2009), Walls (2013), Customer Satisfaction: Sekaran and Bougie (2009) and Walls (2013), Delivery Service Quality: Rigopoulou *et al.* (2008), Fear of pandemic (Corona Virus: COVID-19): Ahorsu *et al.* (2020), Installation Service Quality (ISQ): Rigopoulou *et al.* (2008), Product Quality: Parasuraman and Grewal (2000) Repurchase Intention (PI): Huang and Ge (2019), and Social

Media Usage: Mangold and Foulds, (2009) and Biswas and Roy (2014).

Data Collection and Descriptive Statistics

The respondents were the customers and users of the electrical home appliance, dispersed all over Malaysia during COVID-19 and lock-downed in their homes. Therefore, the online survey was considered the most suitable method to collect data. The author(s) collected the respondents' email addresses from different consumer groups and distributed the questionnaire to more than 1500 email addresses and social media groups (WhatsApp, Facebook, FB Messenger, and LinkedIn) in Google Forms in both languages (Wright, 2005). The instrument has a cover letter mentioning the purpose of the study and data usage. The respondent who used or purchased electrical home appliances were considered active participants. This purposing sampling technique confirmed a question in the questionnaire about whether they use and/or purchase these items. A total of 400 questionnaires were received in one month after twice reminders.

Ethical approval: This study was under the Putra Business School (Malaysia) Internal Research Grant 2021/2022, date: 01 March 2021; Ref: PBS/RMC-PL/IG/2021/03; Project
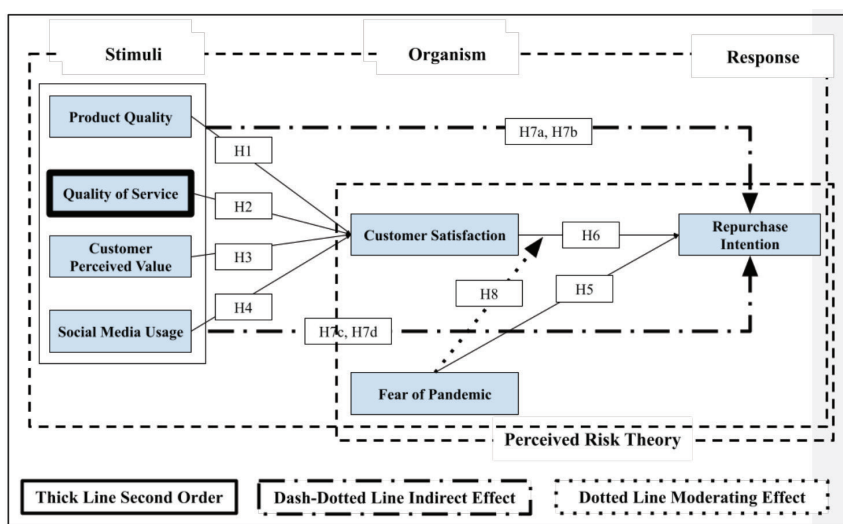

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Code: PBSIG/2021/03. Researchers conduct studies involving human participants per institutional and national research committee's ethical standards, the 1964 Helsinki Declaration, and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. The questionnaire with a cover letter stated the purpose of the survey assuring confidentiality and sought respondents' consent. The study confirmed that informed consent was obtained from all patients/participants for your experiments.

Respondent Profile

The demographic information of respondents included gender, age (years), marital status, number of family members, education, occupation, monthly income (salary), race, and religion. In this study, females were 45% and males were Male 55%. In the age category, they were as 30 years and below (26%), 31 to 40 years (32%), 41 to 50 years (24%), 51 to 60 years (13%) and 60 years and above (5%). The majority of the respondents were between 31 to 40 years old. Most respondents were married (74%) and others were single (26%). Regarding family structure, they were two members (17%), three members (15%), four members (23%), five members (18%) and more than five (27%). In education level, they had Bachelor's degrees (7%), Diploma/*Sijil* degrees (21%), Master's degrees (61%) and the rest were PhD (11%) graduates. Their occupation spectrum was such as Govt. Employee (27%), Private Service (26%), Student (15%), Self-employed (13%),

Private Services (9%), and Others (10%). Their income level was as below as 2K (13%), 2K to 4K (23%), 4K to 6K (15%), 6K to 8K (20%), 8K to 10K (12%), and above 10K (17%). The respondents were from multiple races including Malay (83%), Chinese (8%), Indian (6%), and others (3%). The study also found that respondents from various religions, such as Islam (82%), Buddhism (6%), Christianity (6%), Hinduism (5%), and others (1%).

Results

Common Method Bias Analysis

The study checked common method issues through four techniques-correlation matrix (Pavlou *et al.,* 2006), Harman's single factor procedure (Podsakoff *et al.,* 2012), full collinearity assessment (Kock, 2015) and Unmeasured Latent Marker Variables (Podsakoff *et al*., 2012).

As shown in Table 1, the fourth approach the study utilised was an unmeasured latent variable marker (ULVM). The results of this assessment indicated that not a significant concern existed regarding CMB/CMV in the current study.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Assessment

The study followed a two-step data analysis procedure: SEM, a popular and widely used data analysis technique in behavioural science (Zhou *et al.,* 2021). Partial Least Square Structural

Table 1: CMV/CMB Assessment through Full Collinearity and ULMV approach

| | CPV | CS | FoP | RI | PQ | SM | SQ | Endogenous Construct | Marker Variable | | Changes (%) |
									Without	With	
CPV		2.20	1.87	2.37	2.38	2.37	2.41	CS (R^2)	0.717	0.754	5.25%
CS	3.40		3.23	3.35	3.41	3.23	3.85	RI (R^2)	0.463	0.507	9.57%
FoP	1.05	1.24		1.04	1.11	1.11	1.04				
RI	2.26	2.09	2.00		2.42	2.35	2.28				
PQ	2.24	2.06	2.34	2.32		2.40	2.32				
SM	1.66	1.57	1.78	1.70	1.79		1.56				
SQ	1.58	1.84	1.59	1.57	1.70	1.49					

Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) uses SmartPLS 3.3 version because of its robustness Cassell and Bickmore (2000).

Analysis of the Measurement Model

In the first step, the outer model (measurement model) was assessed through a reliability test and validity test (Figure 2). Construct reliability test was checked through indicator reliability, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability.

Cronbach's alpha was between 0.861 and 0.967 and composite reliability was between 0.905 and 0.973, indicating each construct had strong internal reliability (Hair *et al.,* 2006). The finding showed that AVE values fell between 0.671 and 0.868. Factor loadings of each construct were in the range of 0.731 and 0.946, larger than 0.70 (Hair *et al.,* 2014). Thus, the measurement model achieved convergent validity. For discriminant validity, the findings showed that the factor loading of each item (cross-loading) and the square root of AVE are acceptable. Thus, the third approach Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), is more reliable (Henseler *et al.*, 2015) because of HTMT's cut-off points of 0.85 and 0.90.

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Analysis of the Structural Model

Customer satisfaction strongly affected repurchase intention (ß = 0.521, T = 9.595 and *P* < 0.001). Again, the lowest accepted negative effect was found between fear of the pandemic and repurchase intention (ß = -0.334, T- = 6.445 and *P* < 0.001).

Quality of service had no significant effect on customer satisfaction (ß = 0.038, T = 0.516 and *P* = 0.607). It is found that product quality (ß = 0.345, T = 4.585 and *P* < 0.001), customer perceived value (ß = 0.378, T = 6.696 and *P* < 0.001) and social media (ß = 0.301, T = 6.445
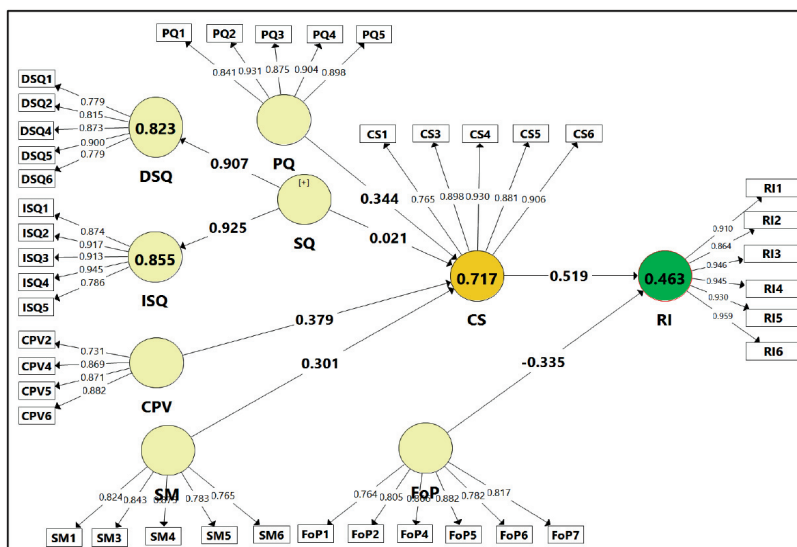

Figure 2: Measurement model

and $P < 0.001$) had a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction (Table 2 and Figure 3).

The Mediating Effect of Customer Satisfaction

Table 3 showed that specific indirect effects on purchase intention were significant among product quality, customer perceived value, and social media. Therefore, there were mediations in those relationships with the presence of customer satisfaction. According to (Baron & Kenny 1986), as indirect effects are significant but direct effects are not there is full mediation through the mediators.

Moderating the Role of Fear of Pandemic

The study inspected the contingent role of fear of pandemic in both ways' moderation: multilevel examination and product indicator approach.

Multilevel (Low, Mid and High) Moderation of Fear of Pandemic

The multilevel fear of the pandemic on the direct relationship was assigned based on the mean value, e.g. mean value 1 to 2.33 as low fear of the pandemic; 2.34 to 3.66 as mid-level of fear of a pandemic, and 3.67 to 5 as a high level of fear of pandemic. The significance of the three relationships (PQ → CS, SQ → CS, and FoP →

Table 2: Path coefficient and hypotheses

| Hypo	Path	Beta	Std. Error	T-Value	P-Values	95% BC CI		Result
						Lower Level	Upper Level	
H1	PQ → CS	0.345	0.075	4.585	0.000	0.188	0.488	Supported
H2	SQ → CS	0.020	0.038	0.516	0.607	-0.049	0.091	Not-supported
H3	CPV → CS	0.378	0.056	6.696	0.000	0.277	0.484	Supported
H4	SM → CS	0.301	0.040	7.569	0.000	0.222	0.377	Supported
H5	FoP → RI	-0.334	0.052	6.445	0.000	-0.438	-0.243	Supported
H6	CS → RI	0.521	0.054	9.595	0.000	0.418	0.626	Supported
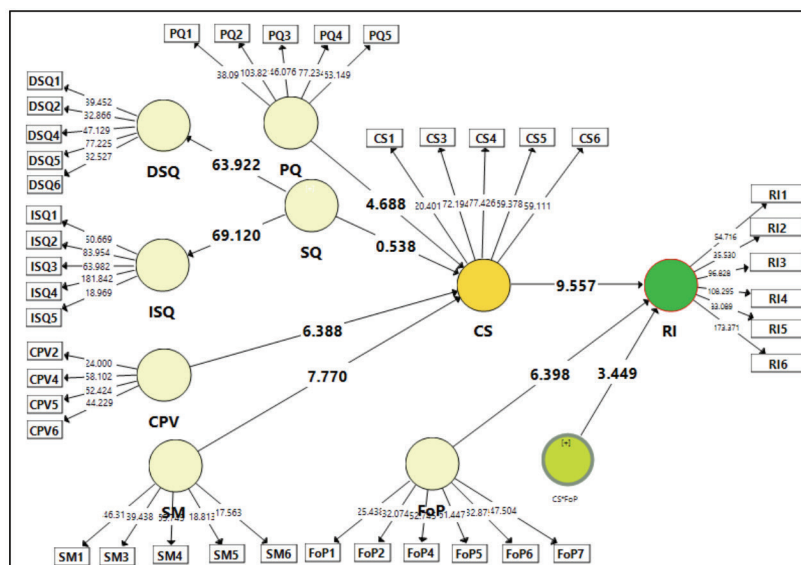
Figure 3: Structural model

Table 3: Mediation of customer satisfaction

Hypo		Indirect Effect	T-Value	P-Values	95% BC CI		Results Mediation
					Lower Level	Upper Level	
H7a	PQ → CS → RI	0.166	4.305	**0.000**	0.102	0.263	Full
H7b	SQ → CS → RI	0.009	0.538	**0.591**	-0.020	0.040	No
H7c	CPV → CS → RI	0.182	4.759	**0.000**	0.118	0.260	Full
H7d	SM → CS → RI	0.145	6.737	**0.000**	0.102	0.189	Full

RI) varied on low, mid and high levels of fear of the pandemic, indicating the moderating effect on fear of the pandemic.

Assessing Moderation of the Effect of Fear of the Pandemic via Product Indicator Approach

The second approach was product indicator as continuous data of fear of the pandemic.

Product indicator interaction of fear of pandemic on the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. The result of the product-indicator approach using PLS-SEM in the interaction of feat of the pandemic on the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention showed that the interaction effect was significant (beta = 0.145, P-value = 0.001); thus fear of the pandemic had moderation effect on this relationship (Table 4), i.e. it meant that the lower level of fear a customer had regarding the pandemic (COVID-19) the stronger customer satisfaction affected repurchase intention. In contrast, the more a customer fears the pandemic, the less intention to repurchase electronic home appliances, as Figure 4 illustrates.

Assessment of Coefficient Determinant (R2), Effect Size (f2) and Predictive Relevance (Q2)

R^2 for customer satisfaction was 0.717 (72%) and for repurchase intention, 0.463 (46%). For effect size (f^2), this study found that CPV, PQ, and SM had moderate effect sizes on customer satisfaction. On the other hand, customer satisfaction and fear of the pandemic strongly and moderately affected repurchase intention, respectively (Cohen 1988).

The guidelines for assessing the Q2 value suggest that values of 0.35, 0.15 and 0.02 represent large, medium, or small relevance for a specific endogenous construct (Hair *et al*., 2014). In this study, customer satisfaction and purchase intention were large predictive relevant.

Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

The study also checked the importance-performance map analysis to find the significance. Product quality, quality of service, customer perceived value, social media usage, fear of the pandemic and customer satisfaction

Table 4: Product indicator moderation of fear of pandemic on CS → RI Relationship

Hypo	Paths	Beta	T-Value	P-Value	Moderation
	CS → RI	0.482	9.557	**0.000**	
H8	CS*FoP → RI	0.145	3.449	**0.001**	Yes
	FoP → RI	-0.291	6.398	**0.000**	

had an effect (0.180, 86%), (0.010, 75%), (0.197, 73%), (0.157, 77%), (-0.334, 35%), (0.521, 81%) on purchase intention, respectively (Figure 5).

Discussion

The demographic profile showed that Malaysian customers used various electrical home appliances and could use them because of their income support. They were concerned about the price, quality, and brand as they were educated. From the social media usage view, they were engaged in social media and followed the information which indicated true and fake news they could differentiate (Bhatnagar and Ghose 2004).

They could compare the quality of the product with the benefits they received. Out of a total of six direct relationships, five hypotheses were accepted. Besides, the study examined the mediating effect of customer satisfaction in direct relationships and found that product quality, customer perceived value, and social media usage had no indirect effect on repurchase intention in the presence of customer satisfaction. Thus, it implied that customer satisfaction fully mediated those three relationships (PQ → RI, CPV → RI and SM → RI). The study also investigated the moderating role of fear of the pandemic. It found that in both approaches-categorical and product indicator, fear of the pandemic moderated the relationship(s).
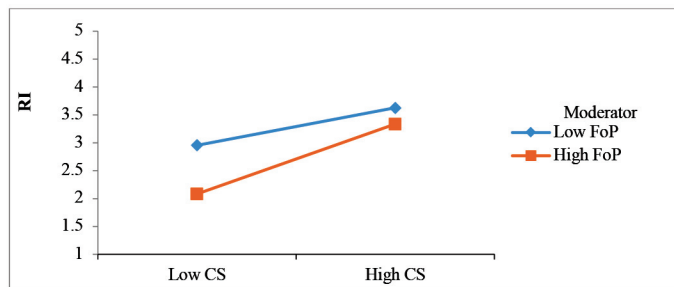

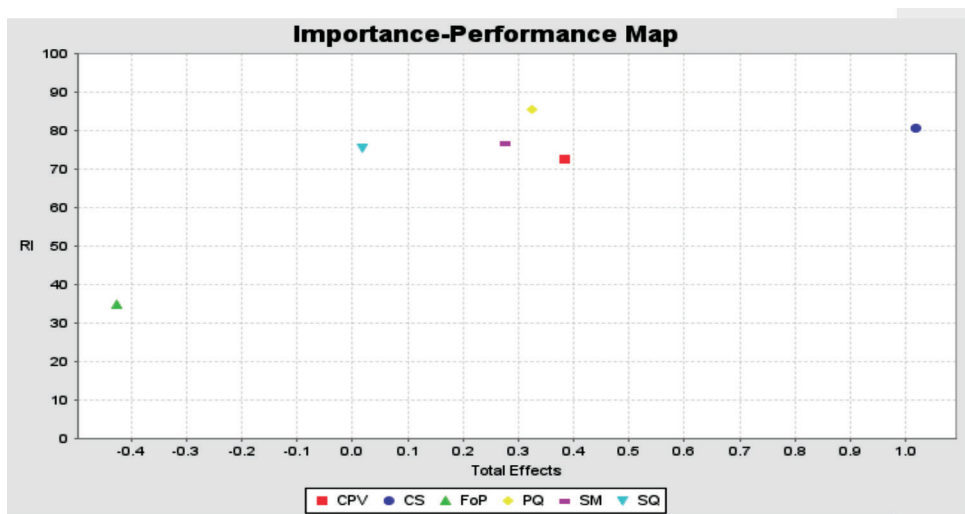Figure 4: Moderating effect of fear of pandemic on CS and RI

Figure 5: Importance-Performance Map Analysis

Product quality, i.e. functionality, model and its operational service durability, outlook and colour size, satisfy the customers. Past studies also found this significant effect on purchaser and user satisfaction (Lin *et al.,* 2018; Gök *et al.,* 2019). The competitive and reasonable price of the electrical items is significant compared to the benefits. This positive perception satisfies the customers.

When buying and using electrical home appliances, when customers share their satisfactory experience with electrical appliances on social media, other customers become satisfied, thinking that they use the same brand/products and may think about the next buyer.

The fatality of COVID-19 scares people. Any victim is scared of death, or someone close to the victim is also sacred to being infected. Psychologically and physically, they are vulnerable (Zeilig *et al*., 2020) and suffer from lower or no income due to movement control and lockdown. Even though many people have electrical appliance requirements, they do not buy them. Thus, considering perceived risk, COVID-19 influenced consumer buying behaviour (Yu *et al*., 2021). Therefore, fear of the pandemic hurt customer satisfaction.

The study found that customer satisfaction significantly influences the customer's intention to repurchase electrical home appliances (Pee *et al.*, 2018). Lankton & McKnight (2012). Unexpectedly, the effect of quality of service was insignificant on customer satisfaction. They do not expect delivery personnel to enter their house because it is possible to be infected. Thus, this relationship was insignificant. Customer satisfaction was a successful mediator in the relationship with marketing cues such as perceived quality, value and social media usage (Omar *et al.,* 2021).

Conclusion

Managerial Implication

This contribution would help the marketing and practising managers formulate business strategies considering social media and using social media platforms and also considering the 'global shock pandemic' and perceive the risk and fear of being infected. Marketing managers and practitioners could deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on business, production, revenue, employees, customer base and customers, competitors, government measures, and international alliances. A company may initiate healthcare issues, develop a health code by Govt and WHO guidelines among employees, and announce it on social media. The company may advertise healthcare issues among the public, such as social distancing, sanitising hands, staying at home, and receiving vaccines.

Public awareness regarding COVID-19 may be prioritised in the business policy, an emergency fund for victim employees and another fund for common people as corporate social responsibility. A company can arrange safe and danger-free delivery service and ensures delivery service personnel are free from COVID-19. A company can announce that delivery personnel follow the health guidelines. Besides, an installation demonstration video can be provided during the selling time for installation service. The online installation setting over Google Meet or Zoom application can be introduced and guide the customers.

Reasonable price and associated service may be confirmed when a customer buys and uses electrical appliances. Customers can be connected to social media and get feedback from them. The reasons for dissatisfaction can be inspired so consumers can spontaneously share their buying and using experiences. Social media's importance and utilise it appropriately to flourish the brand and business. Any fake and untrue news must be faced strategically so that customers do get confused. Regularly updating the company website with the latest information and opening a section wherein the customer can interact with each other and the company.

The company can initiate public relations activities in the event of any defamatory news, message, propaganda, or misinformation in

social media. These companies can maintain a public relation cell or improve existing cells to protect brand image.

Theoretical Contribution

The study adopted two theories that show relationships between repurchase intention and its determinants in developing and least developed countries and could yield different results. How the repurchase intention works in those countries justifies delineating the relationships between product quality, quality of service, customer perceived value, social media, customer satisfaction, repurchase intention and fear of pandemic.

The study contributed to the body knowledge, namely (i) it introduced the new construct 'fear of pandemic' explaining how customers fear the pandemic (COVID-19) in repurchase decisions. (ii) The new construct contributed to the perceived risk theory and was extended to physical products at a critical time. (iii) The study used quality of service (delivery and installation service) and found insignificant due to the pandemic when customers refused to take in-person service for fear of being infected. (iv) The study used fear of pandemic construct as a dual aspect: Exogenous and moderation. (v) The study found that various levels of fear affect consumer buying decisions and behaviour. The lower level of fear enhances the intention to repurchase electrical home appliances, and the higher level of fear restricts consumers in the buying process. (vi) Social media usage extended the buying pattern and usage of consumers in literature, i.e. those who trust social media's information behave bidirectionally. True news creates trust in the brand, and false news dismantles their minds, affecting the next buying of electrical home appliances. Again, those who do not trust social media suffer from an information gap and dissatisfaction even though they buy the right thing at the right price and have a good experience. (vii) This study extended the S-O-R theory in the physical product in emergency times. (viii) Last but not least contribution to the theoretical ground is

the mediating impact of customer satisfaction between marketing stimuli and repurchase intention.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study was not self-sufficient without any limitations. These limitations lie in either sample and sample size or methodological or theoretical choice. The sample can be larger as the data were collected from a larger state of Malaysia. A probability sampling technique might produce more representative findings. The sample size cannot be ignored. The participants were selected on the criterion of whether they use social media or are involved in it. Many people who do not purchase social media and use electronic home appliances were excluded systematically. In the methodology aspect, data were collected from purchasers and users of multiple home appliances. Respondents use different types of home appliances from various brands. However, they were asked to answer the questionnaire to choose one or two preferred brands. The respondents chose only one or two brands for one or two types of appliances. They may have several home appliances for their daily use, which are better for their respective purposes (TV, refrigerator, washing machine, and fans). Therefore, they were confined to only one or two choices, and respondents could not express their choice in all cases. The study used the SOR theory, besides other theories could be used.

The current study provided an effective insight and understanding of the issue associated with brand loyalty to electrical home appliances. Social media usage and fear of the pandemic were the major contributions of this study during this COVID-19. Besides the significant results, this study has some loopholes: New areas or contextual regions, adoption of a repair service, return service, routine check-up service, cash-back service, online consumer service, replacement service, and discount service. The future study would apply the probabilistic sample. Future research might be done through covariance base equation modelling (CB-

SEM) to confirm the theoretical assumption of stimulus-organism-response or expectancy disconfirmation theory in the future model. The future study can be extended through the country or to another country. Longitudinal research on particular customers could be conducted using other variables, such as price, advertisement, marketing mix, brand commitment, brand attachment, brand attitude, and word of mouth can be used.

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