

A Business Model of Purchase Stimulus on the Consumer Intention to Buy Products Under Volume Discount Through Consumer Behavior Factors

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Abstract: The importance of sales promotion has increased dramatically as the purchasing power of money has gone up ever before in developing and developed countries. Malaysia is one of the biggest sales promotion markets where the highest proportion of 81% is driven by retailers in the year 2009 as compared to 77% in 2008 (Nielsen, 2010). Volume discount is an attractive promotion strategy among Malaysian consumers and is commonly prevalent in the market. Volume discount includes four components namely Buy one get one free (BOGO), Buy one and get next one with 50% discount, up to 50% extra volume and coupons which give extra volume on repurchase. The retailers in the market arbitrarily adopt volume discount without prior information on the purchase stimulus and consumer behavior pattern on the intention to buy products. In the current article, a robust and innovative model has been proposed to explain how the purchase stimulus and consumer behavior factors influence on the consumer intention to purchase products which will in turn help retailers to implement volume discount strategy in the right direction.

Key words: Volume discount, Consumer behavior, Purchase stimulus, Robust Model.

INTRODUCTION

The marketing budget has been reallocated in recent past, so that sales promotion accounts for a bigger percentage of spending than ever before. It is estimated that marketers spend between 60% and 75% of their promotional budget on sales promotion (Belch & Belch, 2007). Based on Nielsen (2010) report, the proportion of Asia Pacific shoppers who claim to be promotion seekers increased noticeably, particularly in Vietnam, India and Malaysia. The marketing research on promotional effectiveness is imperative at this juncture as sales promotions require a huge proportion of marketing expenditure (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Volume discount is an attractive promotion strategy among Asian Pacific consumers and is commonly prevalent in the market. For existing consumers, the main source to achieve sales through promotions is to increase purchase quantity for stockpiling which may lead to increase in consumption and reducing brand switching. On the other hand, new consumers, the sales may be achieved through brand switchers and store switchers. Given the prevalence of volume discount scheme in the market coupled with retailers' lack of knowledge on volume discount, marketers promote products under the scheme with less success. The key managerial questions regarding volume discount promotion are:

- 1) Which factors do effect on consumer decision to buy product under volume discount?
- 2) Which products are suitable to sell under this scheme?
- 3) Volume discount is appropriate for which kind of store?
- 4) Volume discount is appropriate for which type of brand?
- 5) What promotion characteristics effect on consumer decision in volume discount?
- 6) How consumer attitude mediates the relationship between purchase attitude and intention to purchase under volume discount?

To find solution for these questions, it is necessary to have a business model to consider the external forces and individual internal decision forces such on perceived savings, perceived quality, perceived self-expression and perceived convenience to extract consumer's intention and behavior on volume discount. Chandon *et al.*, (2000) stated that sales promotion provides utilitarian benefit which includes savings, quality and convenience among others. According to them, sales promotion leads to hedonic benefits such as value expression, exploration and entertainment but exploration and entertainment were not found to be significant on the effect of volume discount. They did not consider purchase stimulus in their model and their definition for some variables like perceived convenience is not relevant to volume discount and the difference in promotion characteristics need special attention. In the current research, an innovative model applying Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

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(Fishbein & Ajzen 1975) and Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model (Bagozzi, 1986) have been adopted. The new business model proposed in the current article may find a solution to the questions raised earlier.

Stimulus of Purchase Intention Under Volume Discount:

In this section, the potential causes of purchase intention under volume discount have been illustrated. The measurements of stimulus of purchase intention under volume discount are developed in Table 1.

Product Category:

Product category differentiate products based on product characteristics like storable / non- storable, necessary / non necessary, fast / slow consuming, expensive / cheap, perishable / non- perishable products. Volume discount is more suitable for storable (the stock cost is low and easy to store), necessary (as the consumers buy them anyway), fast consuming (the number of trips to shop and time of purchasing is minimum), cheap (no need to pay so much to buy lots) and non perishable products (decrease the risk of spoilage). Gendall *et al.*, (2006) stated that the most significant sales promotion for fast moving products depend on stockpile characteristics and the price level of the products. For low price and easy to store items, volume discount is the more attractive option than cash discount.

Brand Image:

Keller (1993) defined brand image as the sum of the total of brand associations held in the memory of the consumers that led to the perceptions on the brand. The brand name is one of the strongest signals of product quality (Rao *et al.*, 1999). Cretu and Brodie (2007) found that brand image has specific influence on the consumers' perception of the quality. Volume discount may be more effective in high equity brands as the consumers are ensured on the quality and they can tap the buyers of the low equity brands and new brands.

Store Image:

Store image refers different for different shoppers based on their perceptions (Hartman & Spiro, 2005) and the retail stores carry different images in the market. The image formation results from a combination of retailer attributes such as shopping environment, store services, product assortment, and merchandise quality (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004). Store image, in itself, serves as a diagnostic cue of store equity to consumers and allows them to infer the quality of merchandises (Bao *et al.*, 2011). Volume discount has the potential to identify the low quality products, it can be more appropriate for the stores to have favorite image.

Country of Origin Image:

Country of origin refers to the buyers' opinion of country regarding product purchase attitude such as quality, reliability, design, price of products. Individuals often have stereo type of beliefs for particular attributes associated with the product image of the country. For example, products made in Japan are considered to be durable whereas the ones in China are considered as low quality. Therefore, volume discount may be more appropriate for product of countries which has the higher quality image.

Scheme Characteristics:

Scheme characteristics refer to the depth of promotion (buy one and get one free versus buy two and get one free), time restriction (10 days promotion versus one month promotion), number of items restriction to buy (up to three items), low frequency of the promotion (one time in the year versus three times in the year) and less number of items in promotion (two items in promotion versus ten items in promotion). The longer a promotion lasts, the less effective it will be, because over time the effect of promotion upon sales will be reduced (Blattberg & Wisniewski, 1987). Volume discount should be more effective for shorter promotion period due to consumer feel of neglect to lose promotion.

Message Framing:

Message framing refers to the way that the sales promotion (volume discount in this case) is framed or present. In other words, the way in which price offers are "framed" affects consumers' response to them. Many researchers have confirmed that the presentation, or framing, of messages on price, affects consumers' purchase intention behavior. Gendall *et al.*, (2006) found that volume discount promotions in the form of "buy x get one free" is more effective than "y for the price of x".

Subjective Norms:

Subjective norms refer to an individual's perception may be influenced by friends, relatives and colleagues (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Hsu and Lu (2004) proposed subjective norms as a significant factor that affects individuals' attitudes and intentions toward a certain behavior therefore it effects on consumer intention to

purchase under volume discount. The influence of purchase towards volume discount leads to consumer perception of self-expression to the scheme with perceived savings generates higher intention to purchase.

Table 1: Measurements of Stimulus of purchase intention under volume discount.

Independent variables	Measurement items	Source
Product category	Storable, necessary, fast consuming, low price items, non-perishable	Self Constructs
Brand image	Overall favorable view, high quality, reliable, Superior product	Bao <i>et al.</i> , (2011); Grewal <i>et al.</i> , (1998)
	Inexpensive, reasonable price, good value for money	Self constructs
Store image	Overall favorable view, good quality service, attractive shopping experience, high quality merchandize, knowledgeable sales people	Bao <i>et al.</i> , (2011); Grewal <i>et al.</i> , (1998); Ailawadi and Keller (2004)
	Attractive store atmosphere	Grewal <i>et al.</i> , (2003)
	Its product good value for money and reasonable price	Desai and Talukdar (2003); Wu <i>et al.</i> , (2011)
Country of origin image	Overall favorable view	Hong and Wyer (1989)
	Good quality, reliable, well design	Wang <i>et al.</i> , (2011)
	Inexpensive, reasonable price, good value for money	Agarwal and Sikri (1996)
Scheme characteristic	Depth of promotion, time restriction, number of items restriction, low frequency promotion	Self constructed
Message framing	Amount of savings, percentage of deal, selling price, price after discount	Self construct
Subjective norms	Friends and family approval, support and preference	Liang and Lim (2011)

Consumer Attitudes:

Consumer attitudes refer to behavioral beliefs and evaluation of outcomes on volume discount. It comprises to perceived savings, perceived quality, perceived self-expression and perceived convenience are treated as mediating variables which are discussed below. Consumers with positive beliefs on promotional offer have tended to respond positively due to the benefits they obtain from buying on deal. Therefore it is expected that these benefits will translate into better evaluations and greater choice of promoted products. The measurements of consumer attitudes are developed in Table 2.

Perceived Savings:

Perceived savings refer to monetary savings (Chandon *et al.*, 2000). Volume discount can provide perceptions of monetary savings by offering more of the same product for free or rebates on the subsequent purchase of same products. Message framing, brand image, store image and product category can create perceptions of monetary savings (Krishna *et al.*, 2002) and can increase the intention of purchase under volume discount. Most analytical and econometric models of sales promotions simply assume that monetary savings are the only benefit motivating consumers to respond to sales promotions (Blattberg & Neslin 1993). However, there are lots of questions which cannot explain completely via perceived savings. For instance, why do consumers respond to insignificant volume discounts? Why do consumers respond differently to different type of product under volume discounts?

Perceived Quality:

Perceived quality refers to the consumer's judgment on product's overall excellence or superiority (Zeithaml, 1988). The final quality evaluation is done by the consumer and therefore actual quality is not of interest. The more likely the consumer image on brand, store and country of origin of interest, the more likely that he or she will possess favorable evaluation on the product quality (Pascale *et al.*, 2000). In addition, the product's characteristics and cues (e.g. price, storability and necessity) can infer the consumer evaluation of the product's quality that are promoted under volume discount.

Perceived Self-Expression:

Perceived self-expression refers to consumer's self-perception of smart dealer and feel disappointment and regret if turned negative on volume discount. Consumer image of brand, store and country of origin have effect on their self-perceptions. Individuals feel smart to buy products under volume discount when they consume a product more and it is not perishable.

Perceived Convenience:

Perceived convenience refers to reduction in number of trips to shop and minimize the time of purchasing through buying more products at one time. Consumers need to travel frequently to the shops for fast consuming and necessary products and therefore they feel comfortable to buy more products at one time.

Table 2: Measurements of consumer attitudes.

Mediating variables	Items	Source
Perceived savings	Doing a good deal, less expensive, save a lot of money	Parguel <i>et al.</i> , (2007)
	Price of products are less than expectation	Grewal <i>et al.</i> , 1998
Perceived quality	High quality, reliable, superior product in past purchase under volume discount	Grewal <i>et al.</i> , (1998); Bao <i>et al.</i> , (2011)
Perceived self-expression value	feel proud of having done a good and feel happy to take advantage of volume discount	Parguel <i>et al.</i> , (2007)
	Feel smart and lucky to take advantage of volume discount offer and feel regret if miss out.	Raghubir <i>et al.</i> , (2004)
Perceived convenience	Reduction in number of trips, minimize the time of purchasing, feel comfortable to purchase more at one time	Self construct

Moderator Variables:

Sales promotion activities generate a positive response across the target market, but the response of consumers to promotion is not similar. While some consumers are not influenced by promotions, others are notably responsive to promotions. Characteristics related specifically to the shopper can influence the effectiveness of promotions such as the household size, age, gender and deal proneness influence on the effect of stimulus of consumer intention to purchase products under volume discount. The moderator variables in the present articles are:

Deal Proneness:

Deal proneness defined as “a general proneness to respond to promotions because they are in deal form” (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1990). Deal proneness is not the actual response to goods and services on promotion but the psychological propensity to buy (Del Vecchio, 2005). Deal proneness has positive relationship with overall evaluation of promotions (d’Astous and Landreville, 2003) and purchase behaviors (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1995). Palazon and Delgado-Ballester (2011) proposed that at low and moderate benefit levels, low deal-prone consumers show a higher evaluation for price discounts than with premiums but if the benefit is high, deal proneness does not bias the higher evaluation of price discounts. Deal-prone consumers have a psychological trend to respond promotional offers positively due to the benefits they obtain from buying on deal. Hence, it is expected that these benefits translate business to better evaluations and greater choice of promoted products. The measurements of deal proneness are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Measurement of deal proneness.

Moderator variables	Measurement	Source
Deal proneness	While buying notice, looking at and attention to promotion	Parguel <i>et al.</i> , (2007)
	Switch to promoted brand, buy brand that are on sale	Alford and Biswas (2002)
	product under promotion is a good reason to buy it	Kukar-Kinney <i>et al.</i> , (2012)

Household Size:

A larger household means more mouths to be fed and therefore a greater burden on the shopping budget, Manchanda *et al.*, (1999) found that large families are more attracted towards promotion. Teunter (2002) showed that bigger households make more use of the available promotions. The consumption of bigger household is higher than the small one, therefore volume discount can be more interesting for these families and household size can moderate the power of purchase stimulus on consumer perception of benefits.

Age:

Age can moderate the relationship of stimulus of purchase intention under volume discount and consumer perception of benefits. For example, young individual have more intention to buy brand products. The promotion of high equality brand under volume discount can lead to more perception of self-expression among young consumers. Indeed younger shopper are more influenced by purchase stimulus such as displaying and promotions and are induced easier through sales promotion compared to elder shoppers (Inman & Winer 1998).

Ainslie and Rossi, (1998) opined that younger shoppers are more price sensitive than older ones and are more deal prone.

Gender:

Putrevu (2004) stated that men and women response to purchase stimulus with different marketing communications. Even among the women who work outside and housewives probably respond differently to stimulus.

Purchase Intention on Volume Discount:

Purchase intention represents the possibility that consumers will plan to purchase a certain product or service in the future (Wu *et al.*, 2011). Purchase intention is used to help marketer to evaluate the proposed promotions. Purchase intentions are also widely used by academic researchers as a measure for actual purchase behavior (Schlosser, 2003). Armstrong *et al.*, (2000) concluded that purchase intentions are a good predictor for future behavior. Therefore in the proposed framework, the purchase intention on volume discount will help marketers to adopt the volume discount in appropriate situation to optimize the business transactions.

Research Framework:

The current framework may be used to examine the direct and indirect relationship among product category, brand image, store image, country of origin image, scheme characteristics, message framing and subjective norms as independent variables and purchase intention under volume discount as dependent variable with perceived savings, perceived quality, perceived self-expression and perceived convenience as mediator (Figure 1). The path analysis of hypotheses for the study are constructed in Appendix.

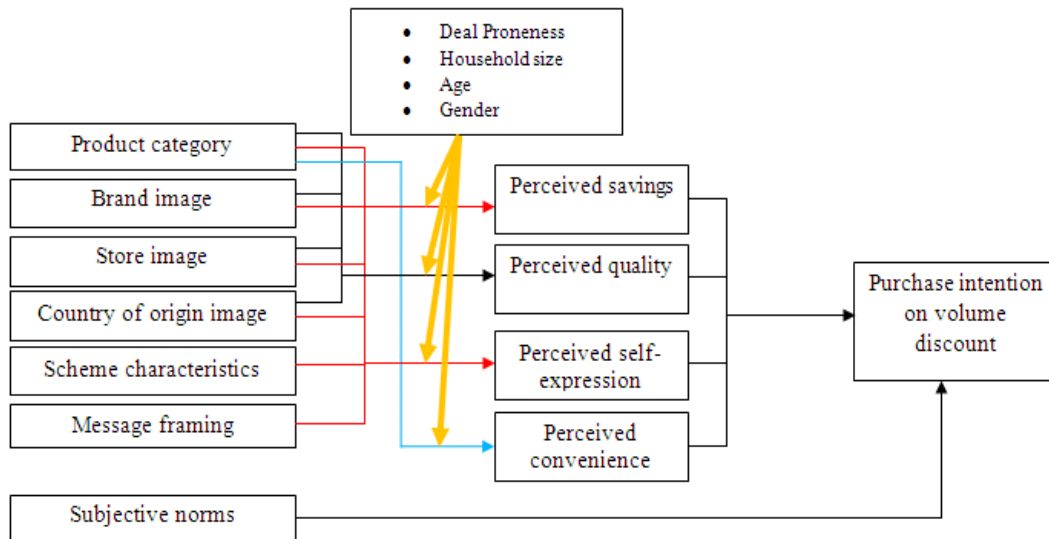


Fig. 1: Research framework.

Research Methodology:

A substantial portion of the reviewed literature contributes on price discount and coupons and there is lack of research on volume discounts. Pilot study was done through personal interviews with 28 consumers in Malaysia who are experienced volume discount. This is to explore the meaning of some variables which have conflicts in literature (store image, country-of-origin image and perceived convenience). Interviewees were asked to select the meaning of these variables out of the given choices. To develop the self-constructed variables (product category and scheme characteristics), the respondents were asked to choose the potential components of these variables. The random sampling to be employed to decrease the bias in quantitative testing of the model. Data will be collected through distributing hardcopy questionnaire. The direct and indirect relationship of the variables explained in the research framework will be identified using structural equation modeling (SEM).

Managerial Contributions:

The marketing research on promotional effectiveness is imperative at this juncture as sales promotions require a huge proportion of marketing expenditure (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Retailers should go for the most

efficient promotion based on product and situation specific to have the greatest positive impact at consumers' purchase decision to gain the maximum profit. When retailers identify the influence and convince their target customer to make a purchase, they are better to reach those consumers through effective promotional programs and thus enhance company profits (Del Vecchio, 1991). The occurrence and the choice of appropriate retail sales promotion techniques are most important decisions for retailers. Marketers have been using volume discount for sales promotion activity for a long time. Whereas the Volume discount is commonly prevalent in the market, there is lack of research on these types of sales promotions and yet the questions relating to the situational factors which affect consumer intention to buy under volume discount and personal characteristics which affect the strength of this intention remains. If situational factors such as store types, brand types and product types affect consumer intention to buy product under promotion then a key managerial implication is that marketers promote the suitable products in suitable stores and brands under volume discount which lead to highest profit. The marketers should consider that their competitor success in promoting products under volume discount does not guarantee their success as a promotion that is suitable for a product or store or brand may not suitable for other products or store or brand. Volume discount may be more effective in stores which have good quality image in consumers mind. It can be explained by perceived quality and perceived value expression. The proposed model help marketers to explore the reasons of consumer responses to purchase stimulus when promote products under volume discount. This explanation and justification of the consumer response to purchase stimulus help marketers to design and target their stimulus more effectively and efficiently trough knowing how the purchase stimulus bring about responses. Indeed, it will be possible that volume discount is profitable in a product but is not profitable in other products in the same store and brand. For example, for consumable and easy to store products, volume discount can be more attractive than a monetary discount. It can be explained by perceived convenience, perceived saving and perceived value expression. The proposed model helps marketers to promote appropriate products under volume discount.

Some demographic and consumers' differences factors such as age, gender, deal proneness and household size can influence on the effect of purchase stimulus of consumer intention to purchase under volume discount. Important potential moderating variables ignored in past researches of sales promotion were considered. For example, age can moderate the effect of high equity brand image on consumer purchase intention under volume discount, and young individual may have more intention to buy brand product under this scheme. Therefore, the promotion of high equity brand product under this scheme can be more profitable when the potential consumers are young. The proposed model recommends marketers target consumers when they want promote products under volume discount. However, small changes in the manner of communication may not only be efficient in terms of maintaining profitability but also effective in terms of increasing purchase intentions.

Conclusions:

The discount sales under sales promotion is a real crowd puller and volume discount is one of the attractive promotion strategy among Asian pacific consumers and is commonly prevalent in the market. Under volume discount, the seller promotes the products by offering extra volume for each product or group of products or providing discounts through buy one get one free. In the prevailing market conditions, consumer expects high quality but with low price and due to heavy competition, the seller is forced to adopt some attractive schemes through volume discount. In the present study, an attempt is made to investigate the situation in which volume discount warrants for in the consumer points of view. In this context, a business model is proposed to study the determinants of volume discount in the form of product category, brand image, message framing and the influencing persons of consumers. Further, the ultimate benefits of volume discount through perceived savings, perceived quality, perceived self-expression and perceived convenience on the predictor variables and the purchase intention on volume discounts are enlightened.

Appendix

Path analysis of hypotheses construction

Relationship	Source	Focus area
IV on MV (H1 – H18)		
Product Category → Perceived savings	Conceptualized	-
Brand Image → Perceived savings	Krishna <i>et al.</i> , (2002)	Perceived saving factors
Store image → perceived savings	Krishna <i>et al.</i> , (2002)	Perceived saving factors
Country of Origin image → Perceived savings	Hong and Wyer (1989)	Effects of country of origin
Scheme characteristics → perceived savings	Conceptualized	-
Message framing → Perceived savings	Krishna <i>et al.</i> , (2002)	Perceived saving factors
Product Category → Perceived Quality	Conceptualized	-
Brand Image → Perceived Quality	Graeff (1996) ¹ ; Pascale <i>et al.</i> , (2000) ²	Consumers' evaluation ¹ , Purchase intention ²
Store image → perceived Quality	Graeff (1996) ¹ ; Pascale <i>et al.</i> , (2000) ²	Consumers' evaluation ¹ , Purchase intention ²
Country of Origin image → Perceived Quality	Graeff (1996) ¹ ; Pascale <i>et al.</i> , (2000) ²	Consumers' evaluation ¹ ,

		Purchase intention ²
Product Category → Perceived self-expression value	Conceptualize	-
Brand Image → Perceived self-expression value	Mano and Elliott (1997)	Smart shopping
Store image → perceived self-expression value	Mano and Elliott (1997)	Smart shopping
Country of Origin image → Perceived self-expression value	Mano and Elliott (1997)	Smart shopping
Scheme characteristics → perceived self-expression value	Conceptualized	-
Message framing → Perceived self-expression value	Conceptualized	-
Product category → Perceived Convenience	Conceptualized	-
MV on DV (H18 – H21)	Chandon <i>et al.</i> , (2000)	Sales promotion effectiveness
IV on DV (H22 – H28)		
Product Category → Purchase intention	Conceptualized	-
Brand Image → Purchase intention	Del Rio <i>et al.</i> , 2001	Brand image effect on consumer response
Store image → Purchase intention	Wu <i>et al.</i> , (2011)	Purchase intention
Country of Origin image → Purchase intention	Han (1990)	Country image on consumer choice
Scheme characteristics → Purchase intention	Conceptualized	-
Message framing → Purchase intention	Gendall <i>et al.</i> , (2006)	Price discounting
Subjective norms → Purchase intention	Mahon <i>et al.</i> , (2006)	Consumption of ready meals
IV + MV on DV (H29 – H45)	Conceptualized	-
Moderators (H46 – H50)		
Deal proneness	d'Astous and Landreville (2003)	consumers' perceptions of sales promotions
Household Size	Teunter (2002)	Household purchase behavior
Age	Inman and Winer (1998)	In store decision making
Gender	Putrevu (2004)	Communicating with the sexes

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