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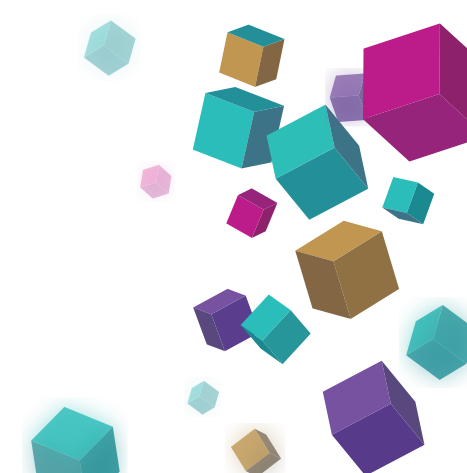
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Kitchen Electrical Appliances Design: Does it influence to the Consumer Lifestyle?

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Abstract

This paper discusses about the influences of kitchen electrical appliance design toward consumer lifestyle. Kitchen electrical appliances are becoming more important towards our daily activity at home. Moreover, it's become a symbol of quality of life in consumer lifestyle whereby the increasing of technology, function, and design appearance makes it more and not just as for their functions. It has also played an important role as a part of home interior decorations. This paper looks into on how consumers make a decision in selecting kitchen electrical appliances. The selection they made may reflect their lifestyle and their status in the community through design appearance, variation of functions, choices of brands, and ranges of price. Further to that, these appliances can improve their quality of life in term of assisting them in the kitchen. The issue raised is that, there were many previous researches on household electrical appliances regarding the context of consumer decision making, but the studies regarding kitchen electrical appliances design toward consumer lifestyle need to be further elaborated. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to investigate the consumer decision making toward the kitchen electrical appliance, on how they interpret the appearance of kitchen electrical appliance. In order to investigate, this paper uses mixed methods which include quantitative for percentage and qualitative for in-depth information. As a result, it can be concluded that, there are strong bonding and influence factors between kitchen electrical appliances design, consumer lifestyle and their finances. The fact that, the design was created not only to impress the consumer in term of aesthetic alone but also to become their representation in the community.

Keywords: *Appliances; Consumer; Decision Making; Household; Lifestyle; Kitchen*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, home appliances become an important element in consumer daily life. While more and more people move to urban areas whereas home appliances also have become parts of our lives and considered important for modern living (Erasmus & Sonnenberg, 2012). The access to design evolution and global market trend through

media technology have influence the consumer taste and demand towards the home appliances design and function. The education level have an impact to the socio-economic, therefore provide strong financial and opportunity to purchase durable and expensive household product. Furthermore, the important of kitchen appliances also increase, because its function and design become one of criteria for kitchen interior planning, which based on product appearance (Seal, 2011). The awareness of product design become important in this day which product design and lifestyle are parallel due to competitive business climate which design appearance becomes central in new standard for product development. The definition on product design as stated by Creusen (2011) is the process in order to determine the physical and performance of the product which referred to the characteristic of functionalities and physical appearance.

The kitchen appliances can be considered as an assistant to consumer through its function. This is because, the function of kitchen appliance that making less time and energy when doing work at home (Richins, McKeage, & Najjar, 1992). The increase of social economic, people has more time for their work and less for work activity at home. Therefore, the increasing of new technology for kitchen appliances will help people to do their work quickly and efficient. In fact for some of the kitchen activity are specialize which require specialize equipment according to the type of the work. The Department of Statistic Malaysia (2011) in Household Expenditure Trend from 1994 to 2010 stated that there were increasing about 37% on spending in household equipment and maintenance. Due to this, this statistic illustrates that market of home appliances are increased due of consumer needs and lifestyle. According to Donoghue & Erasmus (1999), household appliances influence towards consumers' living which can be seen in four factors in incomes, professions, job and quality of life. In addition, visual appearance has a main role to attract consumer to buy product. This is because, when consumer make product choices there are four major factors which are impressiveness, aesthetic, exterior finishes and reputation (Erasmus, Donoghue, & Sonnenberg, 2011).

2. Product Visual Appearance And Consumer Response

Visual appearance of product not only to create aesthetic or symbolic but also give pleasure for consumer while for their home interior (Bloch, 1995). Moreover, through appearance of product, there are opportunity for success and create the advantages in the market. In addition, the appearance of product showed positive significant in perceiving quality, whereby when the highest the consumer value the appearance, the higher the consumer perception of quality. The reason is, when determine product quality, the consumer use product appearance as a signal when evaluate (Dawar & Parker, 1994). Due to this, the appearance becomes one of factors for the consumers to evaluate regarding product quality and performance. Apart from that, Bloch (1995) mentions that product form make important roles in consumer response in cognitive and also affective response toward product evaluation. This can be shown in Figure (1)

below:

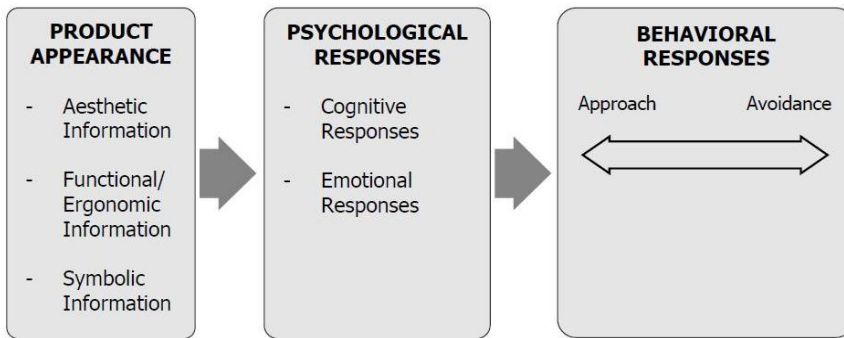


Fig 1: Consumers' Psychological and Behavioral Responses to the Product Appearance (Bloch, 1995)

Based on Figure (1) above, it showed that based on product appearance, consumer intent to see aesthetic, functional and Ergonomic, and also symbolic value that has present by a product. Therefore, based on information on product appearance, it can trigger cognitive responses and emotional response which consumer can concluded to approach or to avoid in purchasing a product. The important of product design also have positive effect on consumer perception toward assessing a product on its aesthetic whereby through appearance, it gives consumer to communicate in term of functional characteristic and give quality impression toward product (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). Moreover, when discussing on form, consumer prefer rounded shape because is symbolic for contemporary design (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). However, there are also different views in consumer perception toward rounded shape based on their perception. Apart from that, physical product appearance are become one of main criteria in consumer choosing apart from brand, price, function and retailer reputation (Dawar & Parker, 1994). This is because, product appearance consist symbolism and show owners' identity apart from its functionality (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005; Donoghue & Erasmus, 1999).

3. Relations Of Household Electrical Appliances Design To Consumer Lifestyle

The term for lifestyle patterns, were introduced by Lazer (1963) in aspect of relationship in marketing field. Lifestyle according to Lazer (1963) defines as a concept of system whereas it refers to a distinctive way of life and characteristic, in aggregative and broad sense, the community at large or any segment (Solomon, 2011). According to Solomon (2011), lifestyle was a pattern of behavior that reflects person's choices on how people spend their income and time consuming. Lifestyle of people are important because it can be seen as a representation of identify, way of live and how consumers spend their money and time (Mowen & Minor, 1998). In referring to Donoghue and Erasmus (1999) discusses that household electrical appliance are

important to the consumer identity which for expression, ego-defense, assertion, affiliation, modeling and reinforcement. These roles come when consumer make a decision to purchase household electrical appliances which reflect response and relation toward people surrounding. Apart from that, the household electrical appliances also as a symbol for communicate to others, which as reflection toward lifestyle, salary and profession. Furthermore, appliances that are installed can be attached to visitor that become as social symbol which signify social economic status and reflect lifestyle of the home consumers (Donoghue & Erasmus, 1999). Meanwhile, (Erasmus et al., 2011) stated that there were four factors that influence consumer decision for purchasing household appliance which are impressiveness, aesthetic, exterior finishes and reputation. These factors are involve when consumer make a choice to purchase household appliance. Apart from that, they found that aesthetic and reputation make important roles in consumer decision making than impressiveness and exterior finishes. However, impressiveness was important in certain level of age and education, which more focus on younger consumer and high level education. These factors are related with consumer status whereas they buy product to acquire status within the limitation of their incomes and social environment.

According to Hur, Kyung Kim, & Park (2010) which discussed about the relation between kitchen appliance and consumer lifestyle, there are several groups of consumer based on classification of their behavior and purchasing making. There are wellbeing oriented, social and dining oriented, family oriented, innovation and action oriented, price conscious and convenience oriented. These groups are related with consumer decision buying decision which depend not only technology product development but also on personal needs and value. It showed that Wellbeing oriented are the main group which they more attract toward environmental conscious and health care. Therefore, this can be categorized into attractive market segmentation for company that focus on household appliance.

4. Methodology

4.1. Samplings





In selecting the participants during the survey, Purposive Sampling was adopted for both quantitative and qualitative methods. Purposive sampling is a judgmental sampling whereby give the researcher to use his judgment to choose which the participants that suitable with the purpose of the study (Bailey, 1987). Therefore, in this research, the participants were selected based on demographics such as age, income and marital status. Further to this, it involves participants who have knowledge about kitchen electrical appliances, the ability to purchase and decision makers. As for this research paper, about 30 participants have been selected for questionnaires and 15 participants for interviews. The target population is Section 7, Shah Alam whereby, in this area, there has assorted population, high commercial activity and active indus-

try that most of resident has capability on purchasing kitchen electrical appliances. In general, this research will look into different type of kitchen electrical appliances, but the focus will be the small kitchen electrical appliances which is “Electrical Kettle”. The reason of this research choosing electrical kettle as a main product scope because it has variation of designs that give a lot of choices to the consumer to choose and also affordable to purchase. Therefore it is very helpful for this research and in modern days, majority of household have electrical kettle as necessary appliance in the kitchen.

4.2. Data Collections

The methods that use for collecting data in this research is mixed method which combining Quantitative and Qualitative methods. Mixed method research is a method of combination of thinking and design research orientation in which focuses on collecting, analyzing both quantitative and qualitative. Moreover, correlation study was used to find the relationship between the designs of kitchen electrical appliances to consumers’ lifestyle. The reason is, to determine a relationship between two or more variables (Simon & Goes, 2010). Due to this, it coincides with this research where to find whether there is or not the relationship between the designs of kitchen appliance to consumers’ lifestyle. In this quantitative method phase, the structured questionnaire surveys were applied to requiring percentage for the finding. The questionnaire set includes several sections, which is the researcher use Likert Scale to measure participant answer. Meanwhile, in qualitative method, the researcher used an interview survey in this research. Apart from that, a set of electrical kettle design images have been given to the participant and they have to choose the image of electrical kettle that attract to them and give reason behind their choosing. This set of image include, brand of the product, price and technology specification. It can be seen from the table (1) below:

Table 1. Sets of Kitchen Electrical Kettle Images Sampling

Product				
Brand	DeLonghi	Elba	Siemen	Panasonic
Price	RM 300	RM 100	RM 240	RM 122
Added Function	360 rotating base with cord storage and a concealed element for easy cleaning	360 Removable Base	Sensor controlled temperature setting and a Keep Warm function add to ultimate convenience.	360-Degree cordless element. Easy to pour spout

This paper uses two types of analysis which are SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) analysis and Content Analysis. The SPSS software was used to analyze the data collection from questionnaires survey. Meanwhile, to analyze qualitative data, Content Analysis was used. This is because, Content Analysis was an analysis technique for objective and systematic and quantitative for identifying specific characteristics of messages (Berelson, 1952).

4.3. Discussion

The factors that influence consumer decision making in Malaysia when they purchase the kitchen electrical appliances which are listed in the table (2) below:

Table 2. Factors That Influence Consumer Decision Making In Malaysia

Factors	Explanation
Kitchen Electrical Appliances Specification	The main factors that influence Malaysian consumer decision making in purchasing the kitchen electrical appliances is the specification itself, where it focuses on functionality, the appearance of design, and material.
Brand of the Product	The finding indicated that the majority of the participants intend to choose popular and recognized brand. While, a famous brand usually has both in quality and performance, the popularity, and influence of the surrounding also persuade consumer to choose a particular brand. Furthermore, the consumer loyalty to the brand contributed to their decision making as they believe in the credibility of the brand such as Samsung, LG, Panasonic, and Elba.
Price of Product	Obviously the price of the product has an important consideration to consumers when making decisions. This is because, it relates to the financial capability of consumers and it also proves that the price is a signal for quality. When consumer chooses the kitchen electrical appliances, the price seem to become a major factor in which they make a comparison in terms of brand, design, functionality, and quality of the material.
Kitchen Interior	The findings shows that majority of the participants agreed on the influence of kitchen interior towards their product selection criteria. The consumers usually purchased a product that suits their kitchen interior in which indirectly make look the kitchen more comfortable and attractive. They choose a color that reflects the modern concept, in which most participants prefer white, cream, and grey color in the interior of the kitchen.
Product Knowledge	It has been observed that product review has an important role in guiding the consumer to make a right decision before selecting kitchen electrical appliances. Through product review, they able to make a product comparison in term of functionality, price, safety consideration, and product review from other consumers. In consequence, the consumer can make a better decision making, acknowledge latest trend and advantages, and disadvantages for new kitchen electrical appliances. Hence, increase consumer confidence and trust.
Consumer Product Experiences	The consumer experience of the products they have used that can be categories into two which are function experience and aesthetic experience. Function experience is referred to consumer experience from the previous product function whereby they have known existing function, practicality, and technology. Meanwhile aesthetic experience is about consumers' sense such as perception toward design appearance, product use and product comfort ability (ergonomic). Based on experience with previous products, they can make better decisions on what type of appliances needs in the kitchen. Therefore, experience can be considered as an added value for the consumer to choose for better functions and designs for more valuable product in their kitchen. As a result, able to increases their productive in the kitchen.

This research paper has shown that there is a relationship between the user and the kitchen electrical appliances, especially in terms of design where it creates a bond between product and consumer. First of all, the relationship can be seen in the context of symbolism between the owner and kitchen electrical appliances. Symbolism as we know is how people respond with the products of their choice whereby in this context of this research, when they choose the design for their new kitchen electrical appliances, they choose the design that suits with their taste, which shows their personality traits to others. Furthermore, based on the design of kitchen electrical appliances, it shows the quality of life and life benchmarks, where it connects with the brand, technology and material. In other words, the design associated with the luxury brand, is usually present with an exclusive design with advance functionality and technology thereby increasing productive output in the kitchen.

Apart from that, the design of the kitchen electrical appliances is also on consumer satisfaction. This can be seen from the user selection of products based on characteristics such as design of the product, color, function, quality, service, and performance. It appears that, when they choose kitchen electrical appliances, they ensure the design and interior colors can be mixed with in the kitchen because, it gives a tidier and clean kitchen. As a result, the consumers that precise in their product selection feel satisfy while express to others people.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the design of kitchen electrical appliances have an impact to the consumer lifestyle. It can be seen through their selection of products, where they select a product not only focused on the brand, functionality, and price, but also focuses on the design of kitchen electrical appliance. In relation to this, the consumer interpretations on design in this context are based on brand, price, and function which determine the design features of kitchen electrical appliances. Therefore, the consumer chooses a design not only of its attractiveness but also the consideration of brand, price and function that give a reasonable for them to purchase. Further to this, it can be said that brand, price, function, and design interdependent with each other whereby each of these elements have a role in attracting the attention of the consumer to choose and purchase a product. Therefore, consumers will take more detail in choosing a product. Apart from that, the design of kitchen electrical appliances stimulates emotion between the consumer and product. This is because, the design of kitchen electrical appliances symbolize consumer's quality of life whereby represent their lifestyle and personality.

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