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Automotive Consumerism towards Car Safety in Malaysia

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Abstract

In Malaysia, road traffic accidents responsible for the loss of lives of approximately 7,000 road users annually and thousand others incapacities. Malaysia since 2006 has been improving its car safety level through regulation and consumer-based approach i.e. ASEAN NCAP. However, the effectiveness of a regulatory or consumer-based approach intervention highly depends on how successful that intervention is in changing consumer behaviour of purchasing a safer car. Thus, this study aims to investigate consumer's behaviour intention with regards to purchasing safer car in Malaysia using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) that investigate the relation between intention and behaviour.

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1. Introduction

At the global scale, road is a pandemic in which the current annual deaths worldwide today is about one million, and leaving some 50 million others with incapacities, World Health Organization (WHO), 2009. In this country, road traffic accidents cost some RM9 billion per year in statistical valuations and held responsible for the loss of lives of approximately 7,000 road users annually and thousands others with incapacities (Nuura Addina and Mohd Fauzi

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2010). In general, powered two-wheelers (motorcycle) contribute to the highest number of road deaths in Malaysia as for year 2014. They accounted for 63% of the road deaths - followed by car occupants with 19%. Pedestrians accounted for 8% of all fatalities. Over the past nine years (2003-2014) the fatalities among motorcyclists and car occupants respectively increased by 20% and 21%.

Even though, motorcycle contributes the highest road death in Malaysia. It is agreed that steeping grow of motorcycle is usage due to relative low purchase cost and low fuel consumption (IMMA 2015). Hence, improvement of safety features in motorcycle would have been challenging. IMMA (2015) mentioned that the safety improvement of motorcycle must consider not only on rider, but the interactions with other road users, environment, cultural and political dimensions that shape and supervise the usage of it.

Car on the other hands, have more flexibility to improve its safety and perseverance. Volvo has announced its vision for 2020 where no one will be killed or critically injured in a new Volvo car (VOLVO 2014). That shows how technology has advanced and ready for future, but the problem lies on the readiness of consumer acceptance. Therefore, the study is important to understand the customer behaviour in regards to their purchase intention of safe car. Nevertheless, it is the role of policy maker and product planner to offer consumer not only safe car, but affordable.

2. Research Problem

Behavior of consumers towards car safety has been explored in limited manner (Dukic *et al.* 2006). It is found that purchasing decision based on safety features is not sole decision of the consumer but is influenced by social groups and situational factors. It is important and motivating to know the car's differential, the exclusive optional, the current design, the details of the latest model of a new car wheel model, the view of young people in general, references to the possession of the same model, among several other factors (Bazerman 2001).

In Malaysia, car safety level has been elevated through regulation and consumer based approach. Customer has many choices of cars but they must be encouraged consumer to buy safer cars. They are many factors contributing to consumer's purchasing decisions of specific cars. Among those are price, brand, safety aspects, fuel economy, maintenance, reliability, interior and luggage space, performance, resale value and vehicle size (Koppel *et al.* 2008). It is understood that consumer's need for safer vehicle is promising in Malaysia (Khairil *et al.* 2015). Hence, the author wanted to investigate how consumers decided/intended which safe car to purchase and what factors influenced this purchase decision process.

Consumer playing a major role for the survival and growth of a business. In reality, consumer maybe affected by misleading advertisement (i.e. safety level of vehicle) and also deficient services. Consumerism can be defined by a movement organized by both consumer and government to enhance the rights of buyers and sellers. In Malaysia, the automotive consumerism are based on three main aspects; policymaking (government), product planning (car manufacturer) and purchasing power (consumer). Hence the study is to increase the understanding automotive consumerism based on prevailing ecosystem on above three aspects in the area of consumer behaviour using the Theory of Planned Behavior.

In order to achieve this aim, the objectives of study are:

- To evaluate the government's legislative and policy framework on automotive ecosystem with respect to car safety improvement in the country.
- To evaluate the car manufacturers' product planning process and their consideration on safer car for consumers.
- To evaluate the consumers' behaviour towards safer car purchasing intentions and its associated factors.
- To examine the gaps in the entire automotive ecosystem perspective to achieve the country's goal for car safety.

3. Research Questions

In order to address research problem as above, research questions has been designed as follow;

- What are the factors for policy maker to consider towards car safety?

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