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Investigation of the factors that influence Non-Muslims on the purchasing intention of Halal food in Korea

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The study aims to investigate the factors that influence South Korean non-Muslim customers' intention of purchasing Halal restaurants "cooked foods". There are three factors. This study indicated the intention of the non-Muslim customers to purchase Halal restaurant cooked foods is influenced by the healthiness, safety, and cleanness of foods and the Suwon area of South Korea. The attitude and subjective norm can help *non*-Muslim consumers form positive attitude towards Halal restaurant cooked foods. The finding will benefit both the academics and entrepreneurs who manage Halal business on how to improve their business. The outcome of the study supports a valuable situation applicable to non-Muslim legal bodies on the present purchasing intention of non-Muslim customers towards Halal restaurant's program. This will likewise help manufacturers and advertisers to serve their clients better to amplify their benefit. It defines a total base for non-Muslim government officials to underwrite the inclusion of non-Muslim business visionaries in the Halal cooked foods administration industry to improve the financial branches of its supporters and fulfilling their strict duties to Halal food restrurants.

Key words: Attitude, perceived behavioural control, purchasing intention, non-Muslim, Halal restaurant. foods.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the worldwide trend in food industries is moving toward healthy, safe, and clean food and people are willing to pay more to consume food with higher standard quality (Ayar and Gürbüz, 2021). The halal food, which must satisfy the shariah (Islamic Law) requirements in terms of hygiene, sanitation and safety aspect, has been gaining consumers' attention in the world who are concerned about food safety and healthy life style (Abd Rahim et al., 2018). As a result, the global halal market has been expanded in the last few years with halal food products recording $632 billion sales, which is equivalent to 16% of the entire global food industry (Izberk-Bilgin and Nakata, 2016). It is not surprising since health-related quality is one of the main determinants of food quality dimensions (Lim et al., 2020).

Also there is a strong demand for Halal products even from many non-Muslim countries (Wilkins et al., 2019). Wibowo and Ahmad (2016) stated that at least 79 percent of non-Muslim consumers acknowledged Halal principles and showed that their awareness of Halal had been enhanced through advertisements. Halal requirements satisfy or exceed a number of well-known quality standards, such as ISO9000, Good Hygienic Practice (GHP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP). Halal accreditation is considered as one of the benchmarks for food quality assurance and its benefits can be enjoyed not only by Muslim consumers but also

non- Muslim consumers. It has been shown that non-Muslim consumers do respond positively to halal food certification (Billah et al., 2020).

South Korea is a non-Muslim country, but the government has been providing positive support for Korean Muslim business environment (Park and Mohamad, 2018). For example, South Korean government launched a smartphone application called *Halal Korea* which provides various information about halal food in South Korea. This application shows halal restaurants and supermarket location and also comes with a barcode scanner sensor for food products so that tourists will be able to know whether the product already has halal certificate. Also Korea Tourism Organization KTO (2017) established four categories of halal guidance for restaurants in South Korea. "Halal Certified" means that the restaurant has been certified by Korean Muslim Federation (KMF) which is an organization that can provide official certification of halal product in South Korea. "Self-Certified" means the restaurants in this category have not been officially certified, but the restaurant provides food that Muslims can consume. "Muslim Friendly" indicates that the restaurant provides some halal food, but still sells alcoholic beverages. "Pork Free" indicates that the restaurant does not provide pork. Organizations like Korea Halal Association (KHA) have been trying to raise awareness of high quality measures of Halal requirements and to promote Halal businesses in South Korea.

Due to the growing interest in Halal, there have been a number of studies that investigated Halal related topics in South Korea. Majority of them were tourism related (Son et al., 2019). We found that there were a limited number of studies which put their focus on Halal food and culinary business in South Korea. Lim et al. (2020) attempted to identify the factors which influence the Muslims purchase intention to consume Halal food in Korea, with the research subject limited to only Pakistani Muslims in Korea. Yousaf and Xiucheng (2018) analyzed the marketing strategies to promote Halal cuisines and culinary tourism of of China, South Korea, Japan and Thailand on their national tourism bureaus official websites. Pratiwi (2018) provided a detailed report on how religious education of Islamic rules influence Muslim immigrants and particularly showed the influence on their consumption of Halal food in South Korea. Even though these studies provide meaningful insights for Halal food and culinary business in South Korea, all of them were performed for either the Muslim consumers in South Korea or the visiting Muslim tourists to South Korea. We found that there are a lack of studies which target their research on the non-Muslim consumers for Halal food and culinary business in South Korea.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the factors that affect non-Muslim customers' purchasing intention of Halal food in the Halal culinary business in South Korea, in order to make contributions for Halal entrepreneurs, manufacturers, and marketers on how to expand their markets to non-Muslim population. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section II provides the theoretical foundation and the research hypotheses. In Section III the methodology employed in this paper is presented. Then the results are described in Section IV, followed by Section V which presents the discussion and conclusion of the paper.

Research hypotheses

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 2020) is a well-known instrument for measuring cognitive factors of consumers. It argues that individuals' intention for a certain behavior is affected by individuals' attitude, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms, where perceived behavioral control refers to the degree to which behavior is perceived to be under control and subjective norms represent the perceived social influence or pressure by the individual. TPB has been applied to many different research areas, including the food choices of consumers such as the investigation of purchasing intention of organic foods (Aslan and Aslan, 2016) and the analysis of consumer's online purchasing behavior (Rachbini, 2018).

According to Ajzen (2020) attitude is ''the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question'' and it is likely that an individual's positive attitude toward a certain behavior strengthens the intention to perform the behavior. Also the attitude toward a behavior is believed to be a function of one's primary beliefs (Ashraf, 2019). Rashid et al. (2019) state that a person's choice to purchase a product depends upon his spiritual context. Therefore it is not surprising, in the framework of TPB, that for Muslim consumers their religious belief cultivates strong positive attitude toward the purchasing behavior of Halal food. Even though the non-Muslim consumers have either different religions or beliefs, those consumers are getting more concerned about food safety and investing more resources to obtain healthy life style ((Abd Rahim et al., 2018). Furthermore, Rashid et al. (2019) argue that the non-Muslim consumers associate Halal foods with moral consumerism and have belief that Halal foods are safe, clean, hygiene and related to social animal welfare. Also Billah et al. (2020) showed that non-Muslim consumers do respond positively to halal food certification. Therefore it is possible that positive attitude related to Halal product can foster confidence and trust of non-Muslim consumers, which may lead to their intention of purchasing Halal food. Thus we posit the following hypothesis:

H_0: *The attitude of the non-Muslim consumers toward Halal food does not affect their intention to purchase Halal food.*

H₁: *The attitude of the non-Muslim consumers toward Halal food affects their intention to purchase Halal food.*

Subjective norm is related to the motivation of consumers to behave with the expectations of their important people (Rashid et al., 2019). Ayar and Gürbüz (2021) stated that nowadays people are willing to invest in food with higher standard quality measures, such as organic food and Halal food. The accreditation process for Halal food is considered as one of the benchmarks for food quality assurance. Billah et al. (2020) reported that non-Muslim consumers consider Halal food certification positively. Therefore, if the behavior of purchasing halal food is perceived as socially desirable behavior by many people around an individual, which is true particularly for young parents of new generations, it is possible that the individual will be influenced by their reference groups and become more likely to have intention to purchase Halal food. Through a similar logic, Bai et al. (2019) found that the subjective norms of consumers have a positive relationship with the purchasing intention of consumers for organic food, which has very comparable characteristics with Halal food. Hence, we hypothesize the following:

H₀: *The subjective norm of the non-Muslim consumers toward Halal food does not affect their intention to purchase Halal restaurant foods.*
H₂: *The subjective norm of the non-Muslim consumers toward Halal food affects their intention to purchase Halal restaurant foods.*

Ajzen (2020) stated that perceived behavioral control is the extent to which a person feels able to engage in a certain behavior. It is related to the perception of people of their available resources and time, which affect how a person feels confident about being able to do a certain behavior. In the context of Halal food purchases in non-Muslim countries, the main determinants of the degree of perceived behavioral control of consumers are most likely the availability and the price of Halal food. As previously stated, organic food and Halal food share comparable characteristics in terms of the food itself and the trend in the world wide food markets. Among the studies that investigated the purchasing intention of organic food, Elseidi (2017) identified the financial resources of a consumer as the key determinant for purchasing organic food. Rana and Paul (2017) showed that the price and the availability of organic food are the critical factors for organic food purchasing behavior. Considering the facts that the global halal market has been expanded in the last few years, Izberk-Bilgin and Nakata (2016) study how consumers feel about the availability of Halal food and how confident consumers are in terms of their financial resources to afford the price of Halal food will determine their perceived behavioral control of Halal food purchase. Consequently, the more the behavioral control a

consumer feels about purchasing halal food, the more likely a consumer will have intention to purchase Halal food and vice versa. Therefore we posit the following hypothesis:

H₀: *The perceived behavioural control of the non-Muslim consumers toward Halal food does not affect their intention to purchase Halal restaurant foods.*
H₃: *The perceived behavioural control of the non-Muslim consumers toward Halal food affects their intention to purchase Halal restaurant foods.*

METHODS

Data collection

The data collection method was carried out by the use of random sampling survey questionnaires. The survey questionnaire method is conducted in the Suwon area for non-Muslim respondents only. Most of the respondent were students. Halal restaurant food issues among Korean consumers from various fields shared their opinions and advised on the current attitude, perception, and behaviour of Halal food purchasing intention.

Respondents were composed of various demographics in terms of age, gender, income, education and marital status. Especially maximum young participants attended to the questionnira part. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the sample in our research. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed among the respondents using simple random sampling technique. 300 surveys were spread in the Suwon area in South Korea. 259 were returned and only 229 questionnaires were finalized and analyzed. The questionnaire was designed in a statement format and then tested for descriptive analysis and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) structural equation modelling (SEM). The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) were analyzed by IBM Amos 22 software (Lim et al., 2020).

Measurement

The questionnaire consisting of 24 items was adapted and modified based on previous studies (Haryani et al., 2018). The survey questionnaire was written in two different languages; English and Korean. Five-point Likert scale was used for measurement of all the items ranging from "Stronly Disgree (1)" to "Strongly Agree (5)", and the items were separated into four segments. Segment 1 surveys the consumers' Attitude. Segment 2 investigates the consumers' Subjective Norm, while Segment 3 asks their behavioural control. Segment 4 consists of statements on consumers' purchasing intentions (Table 1).

Data analysis

We performed the data analysis by a structural equation model (SEM) with AMOS ver. 22.0. SEM provides a state-of-the-art approach for analyzing mediated relationships among variables, particularly when multiple measures are required to capture the focal variables. Based on Haryani et al. (2018) the two-step approach was employed where first the measurement model is examined with a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which is then followed by the analysis of the structural model for testing the proposed research hypotheses.

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample.

	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Age		
Bellow and 18	10	4.4
19 – 30	103	45.0
31 – 40	88	38.4
41 – 50	24	10.5
50 and more	4	1.7
Marital Status		
Single	119	52.0
Married	110	48.0
Gender		
Male	143	62.4
Female	86	37.6
Education		
High School Degree	74	32.3
Undergraduate Degree	54	23.6
Master Degree or more	101	44.1
Occupation		
Student	164	71.6
Work in a company	37	16.2
Doing own business	19	8.3
Others	9	3.9

Table 2. CFA results for the measurement model

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	p-value	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
Attitude	A4	0.746		0.718	0.719	0.561
	A5	0.752	< 0.001			
Subjective Norm	SN2	0.532		0.715	0.719	0.461
	SN3	0.638	< 0.001			
	SN4	0.608	< 0.001			
	SN5	0.577	< 0.001			
Perceived Behavioral Control	PBC4	0.743		0.723	0.733	0.481
	PBC3	0.910	< 0.001			
	PBC5	0.603	< 0.001			
Purchasing Intention	PI3	0.576		0.780	0.801	0.578
	PI4	0.701	< 0.001			
	PI5	0.74	< 0.001			

CR: Composite Reliability AVE: Average Variance Extracted

RESULTS

Measurement model

The validity and reliability of the model were checked by a CFA and the results are illustrated in Table 2. First, the items with low factor loadings were excluded from the analysis. The scale reliabilities of all the constructs (by Cronbach's alpha) exceeded the recommended cutoff of 0.70 (Fikkers et al., 2017) and all the items in the model
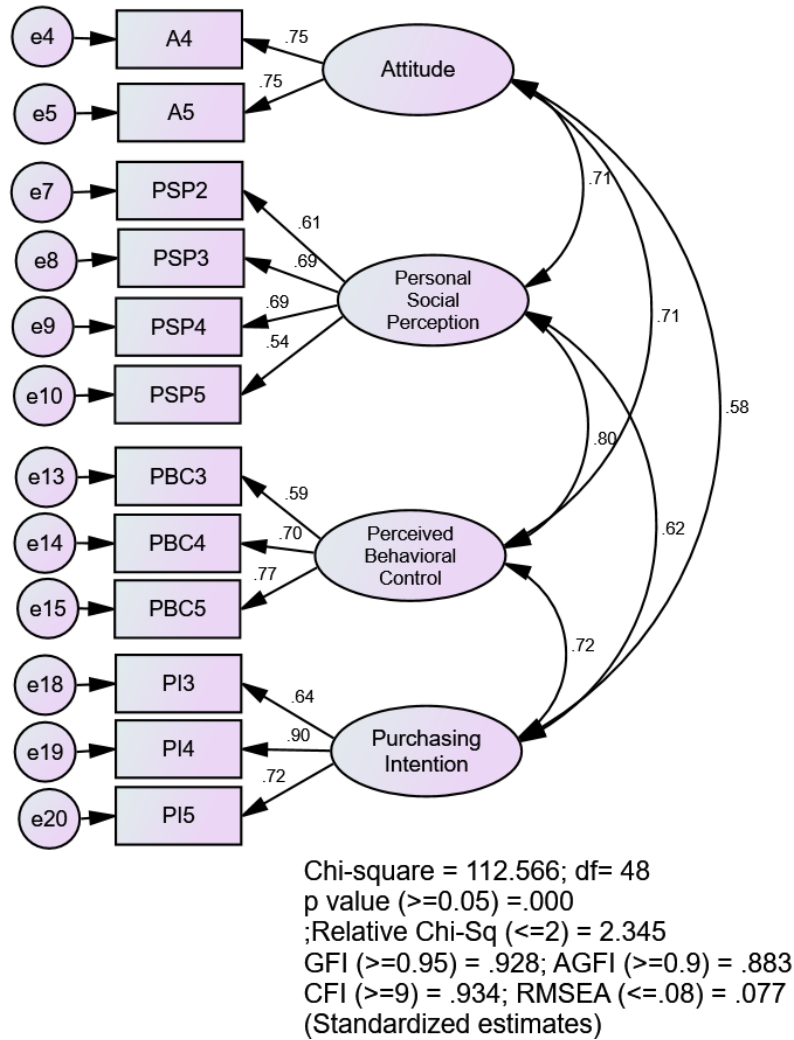
Chi-square = 112.566; df= 48
p value (>=0.05) =.000
;Relative Chi-Sq (<=2) = 2.345
GFI (>=0.95) = .928; AGFI (>=0.9) = .883
CFI (>=9) = .934; RMSEA (<=.08) = .077
(Standardized estimates)

Figure 1. Measurement Model

loaded significantly on their corresponding constructs (p- value < 0.001). The model fit statistics showed the measurement model has a good fit with the data (Hair, 1998) - the Chi-Square (χ2) was 112.566 (df=48, P<0.000), with the χ2/df of 2.345, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.077, the comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.934, the goodness of fit index (GFI) was 0.928, and the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) was 0.883. The composite reliability (CR) values of the constructs were all above 0.7 and some of the average variance extracted (AVE) were little less than 0.5. Therefore, we checked VIF(Variance Inflation Factor) for the possibility of multicollinearity and all the constructs showed VIF values between 1.5 and 2.0 (Attitude: 1.525, Subjective Norm: 1.758, Perceived Behavioral Control: 1.734), which did not indicate multicollinearity. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), if AVE is less than 0.5 but composite reliability is higher than 0.6, the convergent validity of the construct is still adequate. Therefore we

concluded that AVE values are acceptable. Normality check of the data showed that all the observed variables have absolute values of skewness less than 2 and absolute values of kurtosis less than 7, which indicates the data demonstrate sufficient univariate normality for maximum likelihood estimation for SEM analysis (Fikkers et al., 2017).

Structural model

Since the measurement model and the structural model are equivalent models, we already showed that the fit statistics are good (Figures 1 and 2). Table 3 summarizes the results of the structural model in terms of the research hypotheses posited in Section II.

Our results showed that there was not enough evidence to support that the attitude (H1) and the subjective norm (H2) of non-Muslim consumers affect the purchasing

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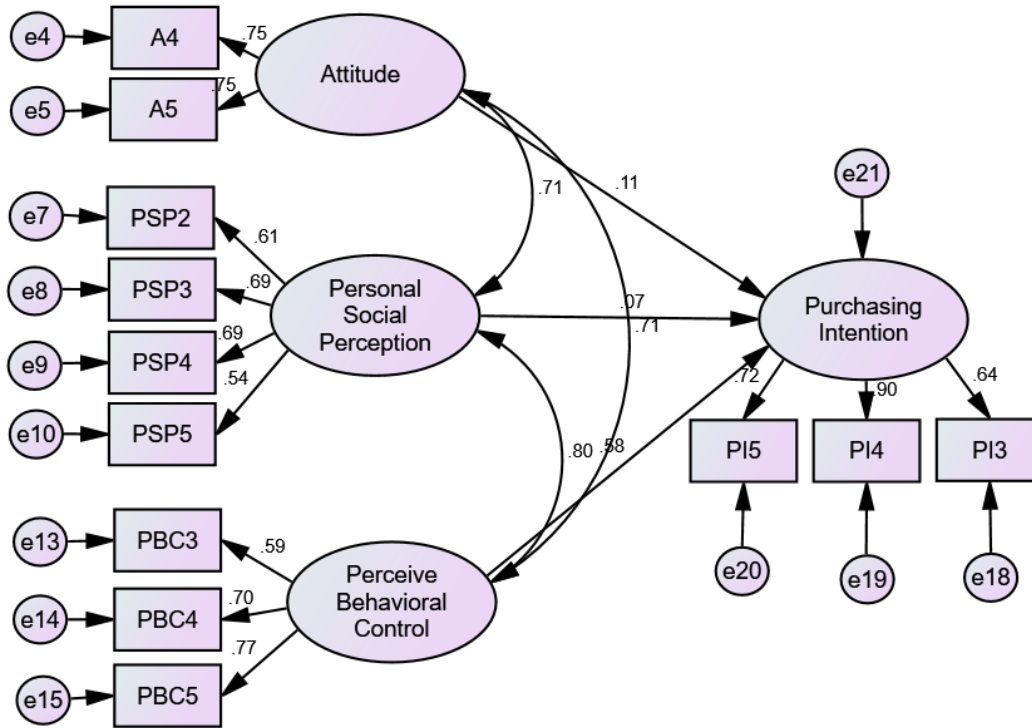
Figure 2. Structural Model

Table 3. Hypotheses results.

Hypothesis	Path		Std. Coeff.	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
	From	**To**				
H1	Attitude	Purchasing Intention	0.097	0.114	0.848	0.396
H2	Subjective Norm	Purchasing Intention	0.074	0.179	0.415	0.679
H3	Perceived Behavioral Control	Purchasing Intention	0.439	0.14	3.148	0.002*

* p-value < 0.05.

intention of Halal food in the Halal culinary business in South Korea. Meanwhile the perceived behavioral control (H3) of non-Muslim consumers did affect positively the purchasing intention of Halal food in the Halal culinary business.

DISCUSSION

In this paper we attempt to identify the factors that affect the purchasing intention of Halal food in South Korea. An SEM-based analysis was conducted and revealed that only the perceived behavioral control of non-Muslim consumers was the significant factor. For the attitude of non-Muslim consumers, it is possible that the overall awareness of non-Muslims in South Korea for Halal principles has not reached at the level where it is enough to form distinctive attitudes. This finding is consistent with past findings (Haryani et al., 2018) where the authors found that the attitude of the non-Muslim customer's towards Halal restaurant foods was not strong enough to be significant. It is plausible that environmental awareness

is not enough for the non-Muslim consumers to exercise awareness in their daily life (Bozoglu et al., 2016) wheras Muslims' awareness is firm based on their religious belief.

Regarding the subjective norm of the non-Muslim consumers, unlike Islamic countries where halal products are majority and accepted by the society, it is probable that the acceptance of non-Muslim consumers in South Korea is not strong enough yet to accept the social influences regarding Halal food from their reference groups. Also the limited availability of Halal culinary businesses in South Korea could be a factor in this outcome. Previous research such as Pratiwi (2018) indicated that generally Halal foods are not widely recognized and accepted in non-Muslim societies and non-Muslim consumers are more independent in choosing their foods.

The significant factor that affected the purchasing intention of non-Muslim consumers in South Korea was the perceived behavioral control. This finding is consistent with the related past studies Haryani et al. (2018). Even though Halal food is not common and well known yet, it is possible that people in South Korea at least are aware that Halal food is safe, healthy and clean. Considering the worldwide trend in food industries for higher standard quality measures (Ayar and Gürbüz, 2021)) it is conceivable that the high-quality/healthy perception of Halal food can provide consumers with the motivation and intention to purchase Halal foods. It indicates that we may positively affect the purchasing intention of non-Muslim consumers by increasing their degree of perceived behavioral control for Halal food through enhancing the availablilty and the affordability of the Halal culinary business in South Korea.

LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research has potential limitations. The effect estimates in the structural model are based on investigated and eventual observational studies. The sample of respondents was from young higher learning institute which may have influenced our model estimates. However, the hypothesis analysis may construct with the mass *non*-Muslim respondents observation randomly with confirmatory analysis. Our estimates may be stronger with significance attitude and subjective norm of *non*-Muslim consumers' purchasing intention. Therefore, future studies should be extended to the population of all classes and professions will be rewording to influence *non*-Muslims consumers' towards purchasing intention of Halal restaurants cooked foods in South Korea.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

This paper examines the factors that affect non-Muslim customers' purchasing intention of Halal food in the Halal cooking business in South Korea by an SEM-based analysis. We try to offer the entrepreneurs, manufacturers, and marketers with meaningful insights to progress their business. The results showed that perceived behavioural control has a significant and positive influence on non-Muslim consumers' purchasing intention, whereas the attitude and the subjective norm did not significantly influence the non-Muslim consumers' purchasing intention.

Based on our findings, there are several managerial recommendations that can help Halal food entrepreneurs expand their markets to non-Muslim population. First, the entrepreneurs need to think about how they can improve the availablilty and the affordability of their businesses in order to increase the degree of perceived behavioral control of non-muslim consumers in South Korea. For example, first they may develop more fast food style menus instead of authentic, premium types so that people can feel affordable for Halal food. Also put more focus on opening many small shops instead of full scale restaurants may increase the availability. Second, business owners of Halal food must focus on aggressiviely promoting the healthiness, safety, and cleanness of Halal food over other foods, so that consumers form a strong, positive, and distinctive attitude towards Halal food. It is likely that non-Muslims consumers at least have a good, positive perception about Halal food but not enough to form distinctive attitudes at this stage in South Korea. Lastly, if the Halal food entrepreneurs connect their efforts on the previous two recommendations with the social media platforms, it may accelerate the impact of subjective norms among non-Muslims in South Korea. Once the positive traits of Halal food such as the high quality measures and possibly the affordability spread out through the social media, the social influence of people's reference groups may be amplified quickly.

For future research, a survey with more focused groups such as young parents can be implemented so that we can investigate the target populations which are more sensitive to high quality measures in culinary businesses with further detailed variables. Additionally, further studies can be performed under diverse geographical settings. A comparative study which compares and contrasts different areas such as college towns, condensed residential areas with multiple apartment complexes, commercial areas in a large city can be meaningful to generate impactful business insights.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflicts of interest.

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