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Research on the Determinants of Customer Repurchase Intention for Craft Beer

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Abstract

With the upgrading of consumption levels, craft beer has attracted increasing attention and appreciation from consumers. This study investigated the effects of brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, and price rationality on customers' repurchase intention, as well as the mediating role of customer satisfaction in these relationships. Conducted in Wuhan, Hubei Province, the study employed a Likert-scale questionnaire as the primary instrument. IBM SPSS Statistics 19 software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was utilized for data analysis. The results revealed that brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, and price rationality positively influence customers' repurchase intention, with customer satisfaction mediating these relationships. This study also found that brand image holds a dominant position among the variables that promote customers' repurchase intention in the craft beer industry. The findings contribute to an understanding of craft beer consumption behavior.

Full Text

Preamble

Research on the Variables Influencing Customers' Repurchase Intention for Craft Beer

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Abstract

With rising consumption levels, craft beer has attracted growing attention and appreciation from consumers. This study investigates the influence of brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, and price rationality on

customers' repurchase intention, along with the mediating role of customer satisfaction in these relationships. Conducted in Wuhan, Hubei Province, the study employed a Likert-scale questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. IBM SPSS Statistics 19 software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used for data analysis. The results revealed that brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, and price rationality all positively affect customers' repurchase intention, with customer satisfaction mediating these relationships. Notably, brand image emerged as the dominant factor among the variables that drive repurchase intention in the craft beer industry. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of craft beer consumption behavior.

Keywords: craft beer; customers' repurchase intention; customers' satisfaction; brand image; perceived service quality; beer flavor diversity; price rationality

1. Introduction

Craft beer represents a unique category distinct from traditional industrial beer¹. As consumption levels have upgraded, craft beer has increasingly captured consumer attention and appreciation. Over the past 35 years, the craft beer market has experienced remarkable growth². However, previous research on craft beer has predominantly focused on technical aspects such as microbes^{3,4}, yeast strains⁵⁻⁸, spectroscopy^{9,10}, acids^{11,12}, mycotoxins¹³⁻¹⁶, malt¹⁷, spices^{18,19}, and brewing technology and equipment²⁰. In contrast, drinking habits for craft beer have changed dramatically compared to industrial beer²¹. Typical craft beer consumers are well-educated young people with above-average incomes²², and as the number of craft beer enthusiasts has increased, so has the average price of craft beer products in the market²³.

While demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, and country have been employed in beer research²⁴, few studies have examined these variables specifically for craft beer consumers. Moreover, published data on craft beer consumption behavior in traditional brewing countries like Belgium and Ireland accounts for less than 2.2% of total beer industry research²². Recent scholarship has explored the influence of prohibition norms, descriptive norms, attitudes, and behavioral control on alcohol identity and purchase intention²⁵, as well as the relationship between glass shape and beer sales volume²⁶. Nevertheless, craft beer repurchase intention remains understudied.

The Expectation Confirmation Model, initially proposed by Richard L. Oliver in 1980²⁷, stands as one of the most influential frameworks linking customer satisfaction and repurchase intention, and has been widely applied in related studies²⁸⁻³¹. When purchasing a product or service, customers compare the actual experience with their prior expectations and experiences, and this comparison shapes satisfaction levels, which in turn influences subsequent repurchase decisions³². Satisfaction is directly related to customer loyalty, a construct that has received considerable research attention since the mid-1900s. Building a strong brand is essential for maintaining high levels of customer loyalty³³. Previous

research has also demonstrated that perceived price, food quality, service quality, and physical environment positively impact customer satisfaction³⁴. Brand image plays a more significant role than customer satisfaction in enhancing repurchase intention and stimulating word-of-mouth marketing³⁵. Additionally, the surrounding environment affects consumers' behavior and perceived sensory characteristics of food and beverages¹, and perceived service quality represents a key variable influencing repurchase behavior³⁶. The combination of good product quality and fair pricing typically leads to higher customer engagement and influences satisfaction and repurchase intentions. Meeting customer expectations for beer tasting can generate positive word-of-mouth and increase the likelihood of repeat purchases³⁷.

Although previous studies have acknowledged that alcoholic beverage demand and purchase decisions are influenced by multiple variables, research specifically targeting craft beer consumers remains scarce. Existing surveys on craft beer have primarily examined microbiological fermentation and chemical reactions, with little investigation into how price rationality, perceived service quality, store atmosphere, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction, and brand image influence repurchase intention, or the mediating role of customer satisfaction. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions: Do price rationality, perceived service quality, store atmosphere, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction, and brand image influence craft beer customers' repurchase intention? Does customer satisfaction mediate the relationships between these variables and craft beer customers' repurchase intention?

2.1 Hypothesis and Research Model

Through literature review and qualitative interviews, we identified several potential variables influencing craft beer customers' repurchase intention: price rationality, perceived service quality, store atmosphere, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction, and brand image. Based on these variables, we propose the following hypotheses and conceptual framework (Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]):

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Price rationality positively affects customer satisfaction

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Store atmosphere positively affects customer satisfaction

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Perceived service quality positively affects customer satisfaction

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Beer flavor diversity positively affects customer satisfaction

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Meal satisfaction positively affects customer satisfaction

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Brand image positively affects customer satisfaction

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Customer satisfaction positively affects repurchase intention

Hypothesis 8: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationships between the independent variables and repurchase intention:

- (H8a) Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between price rational-

ity and repurchase intention

- (H8b) Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between store atmosphere and repurchase intention
- (H8c) Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived service quality and repurchase intention
- (H8d) Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between beer flavor diversity and repurchase intention
- (H8e) Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between catering satisfaction and repurchase intention
- (H8f) Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention

2.2 Sample and Data Collection

This study was conducted in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, with questionnaire data collected from February 5 to March 5, 2021. The questionnaire employed a Likert scale format and gathered data based on the preliminary conceptual framework. Price rationality, perceived service quality, store atmosphere, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction, and brand image served as independent variables, customer satisfaction as the mediating variable, and repurchase intention as the dependent variable. To ensure questionnaire reliability, a set of reverse-coded items was included to identify and exclude invalid responses. Following questionnaire development, a pilot survey was administered, yielding 32 valid responses from 32 distributed questionnaires. By March 5, 2021, a total of 435 questionnaires had been collected. After removing 149 invalid questionnaires, 286 valid responses remained, representing an effective recovery rate of 65.75%. The measurement scales used in this study have demonstrated internal reliability and convergent validity in previous research and are widely used in academic studies, ensuring the scientific rigor of the model construction^{38,39}. The questionnaire consisted of eight question sets, all using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

2.3 Statistical Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics 19 software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used to analyze the valid questionnaires. First, frequency analysis was conducted to determine the demographic characteristics of the sample. Second, reliability and validity analyses were performed to assess the measurement properties and calculate variable means and standard deviations. Third, one-way ANOVA was used to compare demographic groups across research variables. Next, the bootstrap method was employed to test mediating effects and relationships between variables and repurchase intention. Finally, the hypothetical model was revised. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

3.1 Demographics

As shown in Table 1 , the sample comprised 166 females (58.0%) and 120 males (42.0%). Age distribution was concentrated in the 21-30 range (176 respondents, 61.5%), followed by 31-40 years (81 respondents, 28.3%). Most respondents were highly educated, with 58.7% holding bachelor' s degrees and 25.2% holding master' s degrees. Regarding monthly income, the largest group earned 4,001-6,000 RMB (20.6%), followed by 6,001-8,000 RMB (16.1%). Monthly craft beer consumption was highest among those spending less than 400 RMB (56.3%), followed by those spending 401-600 RMB (17.8%).

3.2 Validity and Reliability Analysis

The validity and reliability analysis results are presented in Table 2 . The communality extraction for each item exceeded 0.7. For repurchase intention, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test statistic was 0.766, and Bartlett' s Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.0000$), confirming validity. In the rotated component matrix, each item loaded on only one factor with values greater than 0.5, and the cumulative variance explanation rate was 88.075% ($>50%$). Cronbach' s alpha values ranged from 0.871 to 0.938. Standard deviations for the six independent variables ranged from 0.820 to 0.969, while the dependent variable (repurchase intention) showed greater dispersion with a standard deviation of 1.045, indicating some polarization in responses.

3.3 Analysis of Demographics and Variables

From a gender perspective, women demonstrated higher sensitivity than men across all variables: price rationality, store atmosphere, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction, and brand image (Figure 2a [Figure 2: see original paper]). Age and education level showed no significant influence on these six variables (Figure 2b, 2c [Figure 2: see original paper]).

Regarding monthly income, customers earning less than 4,000 RMB showed significantly higher perceptions of store atmosphere and brand image compared to those earning more than 10,000 RMB. Customers earning less than 6,000 RMB reported significantly higher repurchase intention than those earning more than 10,000 RMB. Additionally, customers earning less than 8,000 RMB reported higher satisfaction levels during consumption than those earning more than 10,000 RMB. No significant differences were found across income levels for price rationality, service quality, or beer flavor diversity perceptions (Figure 2d [Figure 2: see original paper]).

In terms of monthly craft beer consumption, no significant differences emerged in price rationality or store atmosphere perceptions across consumption levels. However, customers spending 401-800 RMB monthly showed significantly greater sensitivity to beer flavor diversity, brand image, customer satisfaction, repurchase intention, and perceived service quality compared to those spending

less than 400 RMB. This group also demonstrated higher perceived service quality sensitivity than those spending more than 1,000 RMB. Customers spending 401-600 RMB monthly reported higher satisfaction levels than those spending less than 400 RMB (Figure 2e [Figure 2: see original paper]).

3.4 Mediating Analysis

Based on over 5,000 simulation samples, Table 3 presents the direct and indirect effects of the mediating variable. Customer satisfaction played a complete mediating role in the relationships between price rationality, perceived service quality, and beer flavor diversity with repurchase intention, and a partial mediating role between brand image and repurchase intention. No mediating effects were found for store atmosphere or catering satisfaction. The relative influence of variables on repurchase intention, from largest to smallest, was: brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, and price rationality. Table 4 summarizes hypothesis verification results.

4.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study examined the variables influencing craft beer customers' repurchase intention and the mediating role of customer satisfaction. The hypothetical framework was revised based on empirical results (Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]). Previous research in the coffee chain industry identified brand image³⁵ and perceived service quality³⁶ as primary drivers of repurchase intention. Similarly, this study found that brand image and perceived service quality play crucial roles in enhancing repurchase intention in the craft beer industry. Notably, customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention, indicating that brand image influences repurchase intention both directly and indirectly through customer satisfaction. Among all variables examined, brand image exerted the greatest impact on repurchase intention.

In the revised conceptual framework, store atmosphere and catering satisfaction did not significantly affect customer satisfaction. This may be attributable to the timing of data collection, which occurred after Wuhan's lockdown restrictions were lifted. Some scholars have suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered consumer perceptions and behaviors⁴⁰, potentially changing how customers perceive store atmosphere and catering satisfaction.

Regarding demographic variables, only three questionnaires were completed by respondents over age 50, representing a statistically small subgroup. This likely reflects that craft beer is a niche, high-end product primarily popular among young, middle- and high-income consumers²². Furthermore, most participants were Chinese, and since craft beer has only been present in China for about a decade, traditional spirits remain the preferred choice among middle-aged and elderly consumers⁴¹. As the craft beer industry continues to develop, representation among consumers over 50 may increase over time.

4.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions

First, questionnaires were administered online, which may introduce sample bias despite efforts to eliminate invalid responses. Second, due to the sudden COVID-19 outbreak, pre-pandemic data could not be collected for comparative analysis. Finally, most respondents were from the Wuhan area; future research should employ more extensive, nationwide sampling to improve generalizability.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, and price rationality on customers' repurchase intention, along with the mediating role of customer satisfaction. The results demonstrate that brand image occupies a dominant position among variables promoting repurchase intention in the craft beer industry. This research strengthens the literature on consumer behavior in the craft beer domain and provides valuable insights for craft beer practitioners.

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