Customers’ craft beer repurchase intention: the mediating role of customer satisfaction

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ABSTRACT
Craft beer is attracting growing attention and appreciation from consumers following the upgrade of consumption level. The present study investigated the influence of brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, and price rationality on customers’ repurchase intention. It further tested the mediating role of customers’ satisfaction between brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, price rationality and customers’ repurchase intention. The study was conducted in Wuhan, Hubei Province. IBM SPSS STATISTICS 19 software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used for the data analysis. Results suggested the positive effect of brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, and price rationality on customers’ repurchase intention through customer satisfaction. This study also found that brand image occupies a dominant position in the variables that promote customers’ repurchase intention in the craft beer industry. The results of study further could contribute to an understanding of craft beer consumption behavior.

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Introduction
Different from traditional industrial beer, craft beer stands as a unique category in the field of beer, attracting growing attention and appreciation from consumers. The craft beer market has seen surprising growth over the past 35 years. The previous studies carried on craft beer have been focused on microbes,[3,4] yeast strains,[5–8] spectrum,[9,10] acids,[11,12] mycotoxins,[13–16] malt,[17] spices,[18,19] and brewing technology and equipment.[20] Typical drinkers of craft beer are well-educated young people with an above-average income.[21,22] The average price of craft beer products sold in the market is also on the rise[23] to meet the demands of craft beer lovers. Demographic variables including gender, age, education level and country[24] have also been employed in beer research. To the best of my knowledge, few studies have investigated demographic variables specifically for craft beer consumers. Data on the consumption behavior of craft beer in traditional brewing countries, such as Belgium and Ireland, account for less than 2.2% of the research data of the beer industry.[21] In recent years, a handful of scholars have explored the influence of prohibition norms, descriptive norms, attitude and behavioral control on alcohol identity, purchase intention,[25] and the relationship between glass shape and sales volume and beer.[26] However, the re-purchase intention of craft beer still remains under-explored and warrants further investigation.

Expectation confirmation model was initially proposed by Richard L. Liver in 1980.[27] It has been widely used and remains one of the most influential and representative models in satisfaction and repurchase intention studies.[28–31] When a customer purchases a certain product or service, he/she will compare the actual product or service with his/her relevant experience and original expectation of the purchase.[29] The model shows changes in customers’ satisfaction, which is an important reference...
for the next repurchase. Building the brand is necessary to retain customers’ loyalty to the brand and products. Previous studies have also found that perceived price, food, service and physical environment have a positive impact on customers’ satisfaction. Brand image plays a greater role in improving consumers’ intention to repurchase than price. Some scholars have found that the surrounding environment affects the behavior and perceived sensory characteristics of food and beverage. A key variable affecting customers’ repurchase behavior is consumers’ perceived service quality. The combination of good product quality and fair prices usually leads to a higher level of customer engagement and affects satisfaction and repurchase intentions. Meeting customer expectations for beer tasting can lead to positive public praise and increase the likelihood of repeat purchase.

Nowadays most studies on craft beer have focused on the microorganism fermentation and chemical reactions. Research on consumer satisfaction, price rationality, perceived service quality, store atmosphere, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction, brand image and other variables which may have a mediating role in repurchase intention of craft beer are limited. To address these gaps in literature, the following research questions are formulated: 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 play a mediating role between price rationality, perceived service quality, store atmosphere, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction, brand image and craft beer customers’ repurchase intention?

Materials and methods

Hypotheses and research model

The study investigated how price rationality, perceived service quality, store atmosphere, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction and brand image affected craft beer customers’ repurchase intention. Accordingly, the following hypotheses and conceptual framework (Figure 1) were posited to understand the relationships among these variables:

Hypotheses 1 (H1): price rationality positively affects customers’ satisfaction

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![Figure 1. Conceptual framework.](image-url)
Hypotheses 2 (H2): store atmosphere positively affects customers’ satisfaction

Hypotheses 3 (H3): perception of service quality positively affects customers’ satisfaction

Hypotheses 4 (H4): beer flavor diversity positively affects customers’ satisfaction

Hypotheses 5 (H5): meal satisfaction positively affects customers’ satisfaction

Hypotheses 6 (H6): brand image positively affects customers’ satisfaction

Hypotheses 7 (H7): customers’ satisfaction positively affects customers’ repurchase intention

Hypotheses 8 (H8a): customers’ satisfaction plays a mediating role in price rationality and customers’ repurchase intention

(H8b): customers’ satisfaction plays a mediating role in store atmosphere and customers’ repurchase intention

(H8c): customers’ satisfaction plays a mediating role in perceived service quality and customers’ repurchase intention

(H8d): customers’ satisfaction plays a mediating role in beer flavor diversity and customers’ repurchase intention

(H8e): customers’ satisfaction plays a mediating role in catering satisfaction and customers’ repurchase intention

(H8f): customers’ satisfaction plays a mediating role in brand image and customers’ repurchase intention

Sample and data collection

This study was conducted in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, and the questionnaire data were collected from February 5 to March 5, 2021. Price rationality, perceived service quality, store atmosphere, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction and brand image were used as independent variables, customers’ satisfaction was used as mediating variable, and customers’ repurchase intention was used as dependent variable to explore the influencing variables of repurchase intention of craft beer customers. Convenience sampling was adopted in this questionnaire. This is to ensure that every interviewee is a craft beer consumer. After the questionnaire items were set, a preliminary survey was conducted to ensure the reliability and feasibility of the questionnaire. A set of reverse setting questions was used to identify whether the questionnaire was valid, so as to exclude invalid samples and ensure reliability. By March 5, 2021, a total of 435 questionnaires have been collected. 149 invalid questionnaires were removed, and the remaining 286 valid questionnaires were collected, with an effective recovery rate of 65.75%. The scale used to measure variables has been proven to have internal reliability and convergent validity. These scales are widely used in many academic studies and represent the scientific nature of model construction. The questionnaire consisted of eight sets of questions measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree).
**Scale development**

The questionnaire used a Likert-scale questionnaire as the main body of the questionnaire, and collected data based on the preliminarily established conceptual framework assumptions. Three 4-item scales developed by Wang were used to measure structures related to price rationality, perceived service quality and store atmosphere.\(^{[39]}\) A 3-item scale developed by Gregory was used to measure beer flavor diversity,\(^{[40]}\) and two 3-item scale modified from the study of Yiwen Gao was used to measure catering satisfaction and brand image.\(^{[38]}\) A 3-item scale adapted from a study by Haywantee to measure customers’ satisfaction.\(^ { [41] }\) Finally, a slightly modified 3-item scale from Barber and Taylor’s research is used to measure customers’ repurchase intention.\(^ { [42] }\)

**Statistical analysis**

IBM SPSS STATISTICS 19 software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used for data analysis of valid questionnaires. First, conduct a frequency analysis to determine the demographic characteristics and background of these studies. Secondly, the reliability and validity of the variables were analyzed to determine the mean and standard deviation of the variables. Third, we used one-way ANOVA comparisons between demographic data and research variables. Next, bootstrap method was incorporated to test the mediating effects and differences between research variables and customers’ repurchase intention.\(^ { [41] }\) Finally, the hypothetical model was revised. The level of significance was set top<.05.

**Results**

**Demographics**

Respondents (166, 58.0%) were male and 120 (42.0%) were female (see Table 1). Respondents were mostly between 21–30 (176–61.5%), followed by those aged 31–40, with 81 (28.3%). Most of the respondents were highly educated, with 58.7% having bachelor’s degrees and 25.2% having master’s degrees. Respondents with a monthly income of 4,001–6,000 CNY (Chinese yuan, 1 dollar equals 6.36 CNY) accounted for the most (20.6%), followed by those with a monthly income of 6,001–8,000 CNY (16.1%). In terms of monthly consumption on craft beer, those who spend less than 400 CNY account for the most (56.3%), followed by those who spend 401–600 CNY (17.8%).

| Table 1. Descriptive statistical analysis. |
|------------------------------------------|
| **Gender** | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **CNY** | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
| Male | 166 | 58.0% | Monthly Income | Below 4000 | 31 | 10.8% |
| Female | 120 | 42.0% | | 4001–6000 | 59 | 20.6% |
| **Age** | | | 6001–8000 | 46 | 16.1% |
| 19–20 | 8 | 2.8% | 8001–10000 | 44 | 15.4% |
| 21–30 | 176 | 61.5% | Above 10000 | 106 | 37.1% |
| 31–40 | 81 | 28.3% | 10000 | | |
| 41–50 | 18 | 6.3% | Monthly Consumption on Craft Beer | Below 400 | 161 | 56.3% |
| Above 50 | 3 | 1.0% | | 401–600 | 51 | 17.8% |
| **Level of Education** | | | | 601–800 | 35 | 12.2% |
| Senior high school or below | | | | | |
| junior college | 37 | 12.9% | 801–1000 | 14 | 4.9% |
| Bachelor | 168 | 58.7% | Above 1000 | 25 | 8.7% |
| Master’s or above | 72 | 25.2% | | | |

Note: The exchange rate hovered around 6.36 CNY to the dollar; CNY: Chinese yuan.
Table 2. Validity and reliability analysis.

| Variables                  | KMO  | P     | CA   | Mean (±SEM)     |
|----------------------------|------|-------|------|----------------|
| Price rationality          | 0.706| 0.000 | 0.871| 3.338 ± 0.935  |
| Store atmosphere           | 0.750| 0.000 | 0.897| 3.906 ± 0.886  |
| Perceived service quality  | 0.749| 0.000 | 0.912| 3.940 ± 0.934  |
| Beer flavor diversity      | 0.806| 0.000 | 0.904| 3.820 ± 0.914  |
| Catering satisfaction      | 0.816| 0.000 | 0.893| 3.925 ± 0.820  |
| Brand image                | 0.777| 0.000 | 0.886| 3.951 ± 0.969  |
| Customer satisfaction      | 0.767| 0.000 | 0.938| 3.910 ± 0.989  |
| Customer repurchase intention | 0.766| 0.000 | 0.932| 3.948 ± 1.045  |

Note: KMO = value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin [0,1], CA = Cronbach’s Alpha [0,1], (p > 0.05). ***p < 0.001.

Validity and reliability analysis

The degree of commonality extracted for each item is greater than 0.7. Validity test was performed on customers’ repurchase intention, the result of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test statistics was 0.766, and the value of Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (P < .0000) were effective. Rotated component matrix, the load of each item was only on one path and greater than 0.5. The cumulative variance explanation rate was 88.075% (>50%). Cronbach Alpha have values between 0.871 and 0.938. From the standard deviation point of view, the standard deviations of the six independent variables are all between 0.820 and 0.969. The standard deviation of the dependent variable customers’ repurchase intention exceeds 1, reaching 1.045, showing a certain degree of polarization (see Table 2).

Demographic analysis and variables analysis

From a gender perspective, women were more sensitive than men in terms of price rationality, store atmosphere, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction, and brand image (Figure 2a). Age and level of education variables had no significant influence on the six variables of price rationality, store atmosphere, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction and brand image (Figure 2b, c).

From the perspective of monthly income, customers with a monthly income of less than 4,000 CNY had a significantly higher perception of store atmosphere and brand image than customers with a monthly income of more than 10,000 CNY, customers with a monthly income of less than 6,000 CNY have a significantly higher perception of their repurchase intention than those monthly income of more than 10,000 CNY. Customers with a monthly income of less than 8,000 CNY are more likely to gain satisfaction in the consumption process than those with a monthly income of more than 10,000 CNY. Customers with different monthly incomes had no significant differences in price rationality, service quality and perception of beer flavor diversity (see Figure 2d).

There was no significant difference in the perception of price rationality and store atmosphere among customers who consume craftsmanship in different months. Customers whose monthly consumption on craft beer is 401–800 CNY were significantly more sensitive to beer flavor diversity, brand image, customers’ satisfaction, repurchase intention and perceived service quality than customers whose monthly consumption on craft beer was less than 400 CNY, and their sensitivity to perceived service quality was also higher than customers whose monthly consumption on craft beer was more than 1000 CNY. Customers who spend 401–600 CNY on craft beer per month were more likely to get satisfaction in the consumption process than customers who spend less than 400 CNY on craft beer every month (Figure 2e).

Mediating analysis

The author adopted the expectation confirmation model commonly used to study repurchase intention, combined the bootstrap method to test the effect of various influencing factors on repurchase intention. We did more than 5000 simulation samples based on the sample. Table 3 shows the direct
Figure 2. Analysis between demographic and variables. (a) Significance test between gender and variables. Women were more sensitive than men in variables. (b) Significance test between age and variables. Age had no significant influence on variables. (c) Significance test between level of education and variables. Level of education had no significant influence on variables. (d) Significance test between monthly income and variables. Monthly income has a significant impact on SA, CTS, BI, CS and CRI. (e) significance test between monthly consumption on craft beer and variables. Monthly consumption on craft beer has a significant impact on PSQ, BFD, CTS, BI, CS and CRI. Note: PR = price rationality; SA = store atmosphere; PSQ = perceived service quality; BFD = beer flavor diversity; CTS = catering satisfaction; BI = brand image; CS = customers’ satisfaction; CRI = customers’ repurchase intention; (p > .05) *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
and indirect effects of the mediating variable. Customers’ satisfaction played a complete mediation role in price rationality, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity and customers’ repurchase intention, played a partial mediation role in brand image and customers’ repurchase intention. As for the store atmosphere and catering satisfaction, there was no mediating effect. The degree of influence of various research variables on customers’ repurchase intentions, in order from largest to smallest, was brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, and price rationality. Hypothesis whether verification was shown in Table 4.

**Discussion**

**Theoretical and practical implications**

This study explores the influencing variables of customers’ repurchase intention in craft beer and tests whether customers’ satisfaction has a mediating effect between price rationality, perceived service quality, store atmosphere, beer flavor diversity, catering satisfaction, brand image and repurchase intentions. Figure 3 depicts the revised theoretical framework.

Previous studies have found that in the coffee chain industry, brand image\[^{35}\]\ and perceived service quality\[^{36}\]\ are two main variables to improve consumers’ repurchase intention. Similarly, in this study, we found that brand image and perceived service quality also play an important role in improving consumers’ repurchase intention in the craft beer industry (Figure 3). It is worth noting that customers’ satisfaction plays a partial mediating role between brand image and customers’ repurchase intention. This implies that brand image not only positively affects repurchase intention through customers’ satisfaction, but it also directly positively affects repurchase intention. Among the various variables in this study, brand image has the greatest impact on customers’ repurchase intentions.

Although price rationality has a positive impact on repurchase intention through customer satisfaction (Figure 3), its significance and coefficient are the smallest among all factors. It may be that consumers of craft beer have relatively high income,\[^{20}\]\ they are willing to buy unique and high-quality beer at a higher price. This reflects that price has the least influence on craft beer repurchase

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**Table 3. Mediating effect of customers’ satisfaction.**

| Mediation Path | Path Coefficients |
|----------------|-------------------|
| IV, M, DV     | VIF, LLCI, ULCI   |
| PR, CS, CRI   | 0.095*, 0.066, 0.006, 1.879, 0.017, 0.107 |
| SA, CS, CRI   | 0.033, 0.071, 0.050, 1.955, -0.027, 0.070 |
| PSQ, CS, CRI  | 0.173***, 0.116*, 0.006, 2.289, 0.060, 0.161 |
| BFD, CS, CRI  | 0.146**, 0.168**, 0.075, 2.399, 0.041, 0.146 |
| CTS, CS, CRI  | 0.075, 0.033, -0.015, 2.080, -0.006, 0.101 |
| BI, CS, CRI   | 0.539***, 0.628***, 0.286***, 3.653, 0.277, 0.414 |
| CS, CRI       | 0.634***, 4.091   |
| Adj.R\[^{2}\] | 0.750, 0.731, 0.820 |
| DW            | 1.875, 1.872, 2.008 |
| F             | 143.718***, 130.104***, 186.2954*** |

Note: IV: independent variable; M: mediator; DV: dependent variable; PR = price rationality; SA = store atmosphere; PSQ = perceived service quality; BFD = beer flavor diversity; CTS = catering satisfaction; BI = brand image; CS = customer satisfaction; CRI = customer repurchase intention; Adj.R\[^{2}\]=Adjusted coefficient of determination; F = values of ANOVA; DW = values of Durbin-Watson; VIF = values of variance inflation factor; LLCI = lower level of confidence interval; ULCI = upper level of confidence interval; (p > 0.05) *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

**Table 4. Hypothesis verification statistics.**

| Hypotheses | H1 | H2 | H3 | H4 | H5 | H6 | H7 | H8a | H8b | H8c | H8d | H8e | H8f |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Verify     | Yes| No | Yes| Yes| No | Yes| Yes| No  | Yes | Yes | No  | Yes | Yes |

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intention compared with other factors. The influence of beer flavor diversity on repurchase intentions is not the most obvious. But in recent years, most studies on craft beer have focused on the microorganism fermentation and chemical reactions.\cite{7,8,11} Over time, more beer flavors may emerge.

Store atmosphere and catering satisfaction don’t affect customers’ satisfaction positively in the modified conceptual framework (Figure 3). A possible reason is that the questionnaire was collected after the Wuhan epidemic isolation period. Some scholars have proposed that the pandemic of COVID-19 has forced consumers to change their consumer perceptions and behaviors.\cite{43} On the basis of this hypothesis, we speculate that consumers’ perception of store atmosphere and catering satisfaction have changed.

The demographic profile reflected only 3 questionnaires over the age of 50, which is a small number from a statistical point of view. The possible reason is that craft beer is a niche high-end trade, it is widely welcomed among young people with middle and high incomes.\cite{21} Furthermore, most respondents are Chinese and craft beer has only been in China for about 10 years, liquor is still most commonly drunk by middle-aged and elderly consumers.\cite{44} The development of the craft beer industry, the data of consumers over the age of 50 may continue to increase over time.

**Limitations and future research directions**

Although invalid questionnaires have been eliminated all questionnaires were administered online, which may result in the recruitment of a biased sample population. Second, due to the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19, there was no time to collect the data of variables before COVID-19 for comparison. Third, most of the questionnaire are from Wuhan area, in follow-up studies, researchers can conduct more extensive, nationwide sampling to improve the generalizability of the findings. Finally, while the consumption behavior of craft beer consumers is constantly changing, craft beer culture is also gradually emerging among Chinese consumers. Not on a large scale, but similar to craft enthusiasts in other countries, Chinese craft beer drinkers search for beers made with local varieties of cereals and hops and produced by master brewers with exciting history and a great knowledge of local ingredients.\cite{21} With the development of the craft beer industry, it is worth looking forward to whether the differences between craft beer and liquor culture have an impact on customers’ repurchase intention.
Conclusion

This study has 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 customers’ satisfaction in the aforementioned relationships. Results suggest the positive effect of brand image, perceived service quality, beer flavor diversity, and price rationality on customers’ repurchase intention through customer satisfaction. Brand image occupies a dominant position in the variables that promote the customers’ repurchase intention in the craft beer industry. Brand image not only positively affects repurchase intention through customers’ satisfaction, but it also directly positively affects repurchase intention. Furthermore, Store atmosphere and catering satisfaction don’t affect customers’ satisfaction positively. This study brings important theoretical implications, it contributes to the research pool on consumer behavior in the craft beer field, and has reference value for craft beer practitioners.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Dear Interviewee,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore the customers’ craft beer repurchase intention. There is no right or wrong way to fill in the questionnaire, just answer it according to the facts, thank you for your support!

Part I: Basic situation
1. Gender: □ male □ female
2. Age: □ 18 ~ 20 □ 21-30 □ 31-40 □ 41-50 □ above 50
3. Level of Education: □ senior high school or below □ junior college □ bachelor □ master or above
4. Monthly Income(CNY): □ below 4000 □ 4001-6000 □ 6001-8000 □ 8001-10000 □ above 10000
5. Monthly Consumption on Craft Beer(CNY): □ below 400 □ 401-600 □ 601-800 □ 801-1000 □ above 1000

Part II: Please check whether you are satisfied according to your actual situation, and tick ✓ above the number, scale ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree).

| Questions                                                                 | Strongly disagree | disagree | general | agree | Strongly agree |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Craft beers are better priced                                            | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| I can live with the current price of craft beer                          | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| Craft beer are priced competitively with common beer                     | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| The store atmosphere is great                                            | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| The store atmosphere of the craft beer is better than other similar      | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| establishments                                                           |                   |          |         |       |                |
| The store atmosphere makes me feel comfortable                           | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| The quality of service is very good                                      | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| The service attitude is very good                                        | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| The professional knowledge and service details of the craft industry are | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| abundant                                                                 |                   |          |         |       |                |
| Relevant facilities complete and comfortable environment                 | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| Craft beer provides me with a variety of flavors                         | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| New flavors always catch my eye                                          | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| Craft beer doesn’t meet my needs in terms of flavor                      | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| Craft beer meet my needs in terms of flavor                              | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| Craft beers have a variety of flavors                                     | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| I’m happy with the catering                                              | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| The catering was what I expected                                         | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| catering and craft beer can be paired to highlight the flavor            | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| The catering is exquisite                                                | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| Questions                                                                 | Strongly disagree | disagree | general | agree | Strongly agree |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| I like to buy craft beers with well-known brands                         | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| I am familiar with and endorse the region’s craft beer brands             | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| Wuhan region has been a representative of the strength of the craft      | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| beer industry                                                            |                   |          |         |       |                |
| Wuhan craft beer brands are trustworthy                                  | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| I’m happy with the craft beer I bought                                   | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| The product and service of craft beers meets my expectations             | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| Buying craft beer is what makes me happy                                 | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| I’d love to keep buying craft beer                                       | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| Given the choice, I’d go for craft beer                                 | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| Buying craft beer is spontaneous                                         | 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |