

Discovering the Malaysian Consumers' Intention towards Green Purchase

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Abstract

The accelerated revolution of technology advancement and its application contributed towards changes in the environment and climate crisis. The healthy environment should be kept in the right mindset by the society in order to cater with the environmental issues. The climate changes, increased in air pollution, extreme weather condition and as well the higher number in the loss of animal and plant habitats are the signal of environmental degradation. Due to the increment of environmental awareness among Asian country, they had become the main target by international marketers to sell and promote on green products. Hence, the integration of Social Influence, Price, Environmental Attitude & Concern, and Environmental Knowledge were used in predicting the Green Purchase Intention among Malaysian consumer. A total of 384 set of questionnaires have been distributed to consumers in Northern Malaysia using convenience sampling technique. The findings indicate there was a significant relationship among the studied variables. The study suggests that it is vital for the marketers to install and encourage a green purchase behavior among consumer to salvage the environment.

Keywords: Green Purchase Intention, Social Influence, Price, Environmental Attitude and Concern, Environmental Knowledge

Introduction

Over decades, the growth of the global economy along with the utilization of natural resources has led to environmental degradation. As study by Ramlogan (1997) stated that the climate changes around the world are the great picture that show it faces the great harassment by human. Therefore, the society starts to concern about the environmental issues that become worst day by day. Nowadays, consumers' concern toward the environmental issues becoming more important because they start to realize the purchase decision and behavior might affect the environment. Hence, the concept of green marketing had emerged in 1970s and green products become popular during 90s. As reported by Laroche

et al (2001), consumers are becoming more gradually towards the environmental conscious, and now the green marketing concept become more substantial among them. Chan (2001) arbitrated that green marketing helps the companies to focuses more on the consumers that really care about the environment as they become potential customers that will purchase the green products. The green marketing campaign will become a platform of communication and will substantiate the relationship between environmental conscious firms and the consumers.

At present moment, most of the consumers claim that they understand the term “green” and purpose of green products. However, in reality they did not really comprehend the true idea and concept about the topic. The consumers only understood about the green product as a product that is environmental friendly which is not bringing harm to the earth. It demonstrates that consumer is only aware of the consequences caused by the usage of the product itself. A common perception of consumers towards the green products is that it has to be recycled.

Even the green marketing becomes a major trend in today’s business world, but it is still new to Malaysia and other Asian countries (Wahid et al., 2011). In Malaysia, it was identified by Nik Abdul Rashid (2009), even the consumers have high knowledge on green products and eco-labels; they might not necessarily purchase the green products or services. To counter with the circumstances, the Malaysian government has taken on strong commitments towards protecting the environment. The initiative includes a marketing campaign aimed at raising public awareness of the importance of green practices. Together with the full support and resolutions of the government (Draskovic et al., 2009), the Malaysian business community has launched a broad campaign to promote an environmentally friendly lifestyle. Latterly, a few companies such as Body Shop, Aeon Co (M) Bhd, Canon Malaysia, and Sime Darby has resolute on green initiatives programs such as “No Plastics Bag Campaign Day”, “Return and Recycle”, “Plant a Tree Program” and other few programs that lead to sustainable and useful in helping the world go green and healthy.

Although there are many environmental friendly products that have been introduced in the market, but still the consumer endeavors to their old buying habits and would not lured the action convert to green products as their preferences. Only a few customers would dictates on the environmental concerns and exhibit it through the actual purchase behavior (Grunert, 1993). This clearly shows that even though many people aware about the environment issues and environmental friendly products and services but the diffusion of action would still very slow. The phenomenon was supported by the surveyed by Our Green World (2008), they found that only 8% of the respondents that changed their purchasing behavior to assist the environment. This explains that consumers’ reaction to green products is not consistent. The same finding by Alwitt & Bergers’s as cited in Yam-Tang and Chan (1998), found the consumers did not carry the green manner although they aware on the breakdown of environment since they are not buying the green products or services even though they said the care on environment.

Along comparatively, most of the consumers do not want to abandon the product functions for ethics and price often matters to them. This is ascribed to the huge price differences that influence consumer purchase decision. The price of green products tends to be higher than conventional products that offer similar functions and purpose. The findings from countless studies that have been carried out by previous researcher regarding the green purchase intention were against each other and it may occur due to the research outcome are may be only relevant in certain period, geographical or demographical cause of shifting in consumers purchase intentions towards green products. Thus, because of the difficulties in

understanding the consumer behavior towards purchasing the green product, the purpose or objective of the study was initiated to identify whether social influence, price, environmental attitude & concern and environmental knowledge provide the positive or adverse impacts to the purchase intention of green products among Malaysian. This study attempts to provide benefits to the companies by contributing knowledge to consumers regarding green products and lead them to practicing green purchase behavior.

Literature Review

Green Purchase Intention

Green purchase intention can be manifested as the readiness of the customer in the decision making process to choose and use the green products compared to the conventional products in the current market (Aman et al., 2012; Rashid, 2009; Ali & Ahmad, 2012). As attested by Beckford et al (2010); Chan (2001), green purchase intention is an important factor of the green purchase behavior and it means that purchase intention will be positively affecting the customer decisions whether he will purchase the green products or not. In supplementary, Lee (2008) explained that the green purchase intention is one of the way for the consumers to choose the products or services that give slightest destructive to the environment and human health.

Another study Park & Ha (2012) confirmed that the green purchase intention can be a point of references for the future behavior in response to the purchase of green products. Meanwhile, Albakyrak et al (2013) mentioned the green purchase intention as an important factor in order to determine the real or actual buying behavior of an individual based on the Theory of Planned Behavior. Thusly, to increase the intention of green purchasing, the consumer awareness should be highlight at the first place. In creating and enhancing greater awareness to the consumers, many companies may be involved in programs that promote the environmental friendly products. As studied by Lalit & Kanokthip (1998), media can play an important role in creating and enhancing awareness by educating the consumers about the essential benefits of environment conservation to the society.

Social Influence

The social influence is usually the changes of a person's attitude and behavior that will be influenced by another person's action (DeLamater and Myers, 2010). The person usually gains the knowledge about green products from his or her family, discuss about the environmental products with their friends and usually will share the information with the family members (Finisterrado Paco & Raposo, 2004). In accordance with Maram & Kongsompong (2007), social influence consists of friends, family, and also strangers.

Baker and Ozaki (2008) in their study shows social influence are important in driving ecologically accountable behavior. Instead, they declare that social norm has a powerful link to environmental friendly behavior which it capable of pressure the people shopping for the green products. In Malaysia, a studied by Nabsiah et al (2011) conclude that the social influence is discovered to be the best predictor of green purchase behavior since it has an immediate and substantial effect on intention. This finding were supported by previous studies by Mangleburg, Doney & Bristol (2004); De Leon & Fuqua (1995); Schults (1999) that the impact of social influences on our behaviors may be at an extra conscious degree. In particular, individuals use less heating fuel and recycle if they are informed of family and neighbors. Therefore, the attitude of caring for the environment should be practiced starting

from an early age since children might be affected with their peers' ideals and behaviors in the improvement stage, especially in young adolescent stages.

Price

Consumers are usually intrigued by price when they want to go green (D'Souza et al., 2006). Young et al. (2010) identified price as an obstacle to Green Purchase Behavior because it will weaken the impact of green values and attributes in forming purchase decision. Regularly the consumers who are involved with the nature are willing to pay a premium price to purchase the green products compared to those who are less involved with the nature (Vlosky, Ozanne & Fontenot, 1999). Price is an extrinsic cue that can be the deciding factor when consumer has to choose in the whole evaluation process of the product.

In general, the price for the green product will be higher than the conventional products due to the higher cost incurred in the process, materials and certain cost that involved in manufacturing the products. Price will always be as the determinant factor in making purchase decision. In conformity with Barnard and Mitra (2010), the consumers usually willing to pay for a premium price on the green product that had certification compared to the one that self-declared by the company itself. As the survey conducted by J. Walter Thompson, an advertising agency, there were 82% of the respondents said they would pay at least 5% more for a product that is environmental friendly (D'Sauza, 2005).

Environmental Attitude and Concern

Nik Abdul Rashid (2009) defined environmental attitude as a learned tendency to react regularly to appropriate or inappropriate attitude regarding to the environment. Environment attitude usually would influence consumers' attitude and buying decisions (Schwepker and Cornwell, 1991). Environmental attitude also has been defined as a set of trust, impact and behavioral intentions a customer keep regarding environmentally linked events or outcome. The environmental attitudes can be categorized in three types which are altruistic, self-centered attitudes, and eco-centric attitudes. Altruistic attitudes include the concerns over others; self-centered attitudes include their responsibility, whereby eco-centric attitudes include care for the environment (Schultz et al., 2000).

Accordant with Chan and Lau (2000), environmental concern has difference explanation which depend on viewpoint and its mess up and inconstant nature. However, the early definition of environmental concern was the degree of preventive approach towards environment (Crosby, Taylor & Gill, 1981), but later was defined as a general attitude which has an indirect effect on attitude though behavioral objective (Gill, Crosby & Taylor, 1986). Therefore, environmental concern can be presumed that a customer was emotionally involved to environmental related issues.

Environmental Knowledge

Knowledge is illustrated as the amount held in the memory that people held which is consists on information in which influences consumers to evaluate and figure out the accessible options (Blackwell et al., 2001). However, environmental knowledge in this study refers to the consumer's knowledge on environmental issues, including the environmental conditions in Malaysia and how consumers utilize this knowledge to conserve the environment. Rokicha (2002) found that the achievement of a high point of environmental knowledge lead to more suitable pro-environmental behavior. In addition to that, Mostafa (2009) found that environmental knowledge has a meaningful influence on the consumers'

intention to purchase Green Product. Previous studies conducted by Schahn and Holzer (1990) issued two forms of environmental knowledge, namely “abstract” (regarding environmental effects, elements, difficulties, results) and “concrete behavioral knowledge” (factual knowledge).

Throughout the studies, abstract environment knowledge can be seen to be more likely influence the environmental actions compared to the factual knowledge. In agreement with Chan (2001); Haron et al (2005), environmental knowledge refer to individual’s capability to acknowledge the environmental effects, analyze, and more considerate effect of the ecosystem on the entire society. Noor et al. (2012) exhibited that environmental knowledge has led to consequences on environmental attitude in Malaysia. The lack of knowledge was a main barrier to recycle among the people with positive attitudes (Simmons and Widmar, 1990).

Research Framework

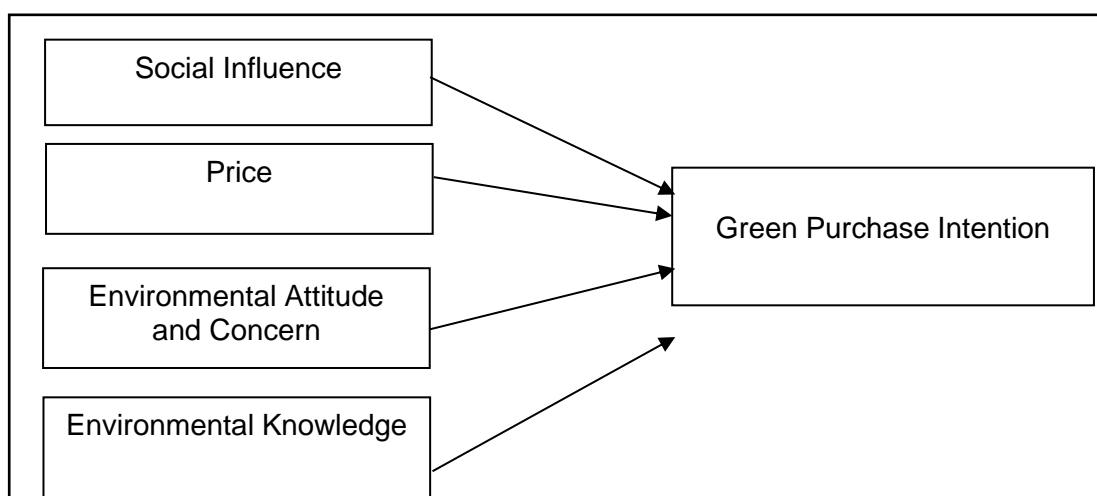


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

Sources: Lasuin, & Ching (2014); Anvar (2014)

Methodology

This study focused on the consumers that were selected from Northern Region of Malaysia using mall-intercept technique. Since this study was done before the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of 384 respondents were accessible at numerous hypermarkets, shopping malls and supermarkets located in Perlis, Kedah, Penang and Perak. The process involved identifying the prospects, approached them and administering a survey on the spot. The convenience sampling techniques assists the researcher to choose the right target sample as respondents were available to be interviewed and willing to participate at the moment of consecutively the survey. The questionnaire encompasses of two languages which in Malay and English to accommodate respondent’s preference. It consists of five sections with 31 items that adopted from previous scholars including respondents’ demographic. To measure the items, Likert scale of 1 to 5 (from the lowest value of 1 indicate to “strongly disagree” and the largest value of 5 indicate to “strongly agree”) were used to collect information. The instruments used for this study were adapted from various sources presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The Sources for Questionnaires for Each Variables

Variables	Source	No. of Item
Green Purchase Intention	Kabadayi et al. (2015), Maichum et al. (2017)	7
Social Influence	Mei et al. (2012) & Li et al. (2007)	5
Price	Silva et al. (2015) & Maichum et al. (2017)	4
Environmental Attitude and Concern	Maichum et al. (2017), Silva et al. (2015) & Mei et al. (2012)	5
Environmental Knowledge	Lee (2017) & Maichum et al. (2017)	5

Findings Analysis

The summary of descriptive analysis such as mean, minimum; maximum and standard deviation that obtained from all variables were provided in Table 2. All variables were taped on a five-point scale. The means for all study variables are between 3.6234 and 3.9542, indicating that majority of the respondents nearly agreed that the four indicators have a significant effect towards green purchasing. The values of standard deviation indicates the ranged from 0.52 until 0.59.

Table 2

Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Influence	1.00	5.00	3.6234	.59
Price	1.00	5.00	3.7031	.52
Environmental Attitude and Concern	1.00	5.00	3.9542	.52
Environmental Knowledge	1.00	5.00	3.8484	.57

Table 3 represents the result of reliability analysis. A value that is close to 1 indicates high reliability. As can be seen, Cronbach's Alpha for all variables is above 0.70 that remarks as good; only one variable consider acceptable with the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.532. Thus, it indicates that all items measure is approximately acceptable and reliable.

Table 3

The Reliability Analysis

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Green Purchase Intention	7	.839
Social Influence	5	.781
Price	4	.532
Environmental Attitude and Concern	5	.719
Environmental Knowledge	5	.829

Pearson Correlation Analysis was explained in Table 4. The correlational analyses among the variables indicate that social influence ($r=0.462$, $p=0.00$), environmental attitude and concern ($r=0.552$, $p=0.00$) and environmental knowledge ($r=0.480$, $p=0.04$) are correlated with transfer of training. Meanwhile, for price ($r=0.460$, $p=0.028$) is not correlated with the dependent variable. Thus the results of correlation analysis provide initial support for the study hypotheses. All the independent variables have moderate relationship towards the dependents since the r-value are between 0.46-0.55.

Table 4
Correlation Analysis

Variables	SI	P	EAC	EK	SIG
Social Influence	1				.000
Price	.513**	1			.028
Environmental Attitude and Concern	.385**	.532**	1		.000
Environmental Knowledge	.339**	.432**	.658**	1	.004
Green Purchase Intention (DV)	.462**	.460	.552*	.480**	

In Table 5, the result of multiple regressions is presented. The whole model explained 39.4% of the variance in green purchase intention. All of four independent variables which are social influence, price, environmental attitude & concern and environmental knowledge significantly predicted green purchase intention with ($\beta=.205$, $p>0.1$), ($\beta=.111$, $p>0.1$), ($\beta=.296$, $p>0.1$) and ($\beta=.138$, $p>0.1$) respectively. Hence, all the study hypotheses were accepted

Table 5
Multiple Regression Analysis

Variables	β	Sig.
Social Influence	.205	.000
Price	.111	.028
Environmental Attitude and Concern	.296	.000
Environmental Knowledge	.138	.004
Adjusted R Square	.394	

Discussions

The results of the findings indicate that social influence, price, environmental attitude and concern and environmental knowledge had become the mechanisms that assist customer's intention towards green purchasing. The study found that all variables have significant and positive relationship with the green purchase intention among Malaysian consumer. The upsurge in environmental education leads to enhanced awareness especially among young generation where the schools can give an attention and considered the activities on environmental education be cover within the education system and the lack of understanding can be eradicate. The environmental education may be included in the syllabus in order to make sure the adolescents are well educated. This is supported by Coddington (1993) that states the environmental marketing is the seeds of environmental education. If the consumers were being taught when they were small, it not only can motivate them to be more concern towards environment, but also becoming green consumers in the future.

In an effort for the consumer to purchase the green products, the marketer may use multiple medium to widen the benefits or extend knowledge among them. Therefore, the usage of online social network such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and Twitter for advertising and promoting green or environment friendly products may become the best tools to get closely connected with people. As founded by Jupiter Research (2007), social network users were three times are likely trust peer's opinions over advertising when making purchase decision. The social network would be a part to gain publicity because the user review on green products and environmental issues can attract their attention and could increase the environment attitude and concern among the uses of social network.

This study also inaugurate that the different in price interferes in the intention to buying green product. At the present time, price still remain the main barrier towards green products purchase decision. Consumers in general will purchase products and services with a mix of attributes including the environmental attributes, but not all consumers are willing to pay a higher price for the green products. The consumers usually did not found appropriate functional options among the current selection of eco-friendly products in the market. A lower price caused by cost saving will encourage consumers to buy environmental friendly products. When the demand for a product is a price sensitive, the lower pricing strategy will be successful implementation towards the green products. This is supported by Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates (2010) that price are one of the influencing factors in the green purchasing process.

Conclusions

The current study has concluded that there is a significant relationship between all independent variables with the green purchase intention among consumers in Malaysia. Even many people may have ecological concerns, but most of them feel that environmental protection is the responsibility of the government or huge corporation. That is the current status quo in Malaysia. Therefore, protecting the environment should become the responsibility of everyone who lives in this world, and to create green purchase behavior among individuals, the people's perceived responsibility should be felt in daily practices. Hence, this indicates that future study and action on this area is still much needed to make sure the green lifestyle practices could be executed in Malaysia and as well globally.

The contribution of this study is quite significant to the development of green marketing structure and strategies which is still new in Malaysian context. Green marketing concept promotes to establish the link between business practices and the role of social responsibility (CSR) among the firms for realizing the healthy environment. The effective of green marketing framework would lead to achieving customer loyalty. Thus, it will enhance the positive image of the company in the eyes of the consumer. The green purchase intention and behavior can be diffused effectively not only by the intervention of government, but the role of social responsibility (CSR) practices among the firms in Malaysia. Strategic green marketing orientation will become essential tools for the top level management to develop action and policies in nurturing green products. A compatible green marketing strategy will serve as the platform to educate and to promote the consumer in green purchasing intention behavior action.

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