

# The effectiveness of green campaign: No Plastic Bag campaign in Penang

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**ABSTRACT:** No Plastic campaign is important in order to reduce the use of plastics that will lead to a greener environment, reduce the problem of marine litter and contribute to efficient garbage landfill process. Penang launched the No Plastic campaign on daily basis starting 1 January 2011. A twenty cents charge per plastics will be the charge for each plastic bag request by the consumer. The objective of this study is to identify the understanding and awareness level of consumer towards the campaign's objective and to relate the consumers' behaviour towards the campaign. The significance of this study is to determine the understanding of consumer towards green campaign. The method that will be using is target-sampling method targeted people who live in Penang Island, whereby the respondent will be selected based on the opportunity sampling method.

**KEYWORDS:** campaign, green campaign, No Plastic Bag's campaign.

## INTRODUCTION

Many countries have implemented multiple Go Green campaign in order to solve environmental issues all over the world. However, the environmental campaign that pledges by the government will not be operative without public active participation (Eden, 1996). Public awareness towards environmental campaign will bring ample benefits if they contribute effectively (Lim, 2012).

## INTERNATIONAL GREEN CAMPAIGN

One of the green campaigns that were executed in China is the implementation of environmental education at school level. In order to expand the quality of environmental education in China, the Ministry of Education of China collaborates with British Petroleum (BP) China and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to introduce a project named Primary and Secondary School Environmental Education Campaign to educate the students about environment awareness (Huang & Tian, 2014). The project managed to help students to understand better about their role in preserving the environment. The school

will create an environmental activity to achieve the excellent educational effect (practical) such as planting trees, recycling and care for wild animals. This project chooses an ideal target

respondent as schoolchildren are at the best age to implement the awareness towards environment issues. The use of the practical method to educate the schoolchildren is also effective as they can see how to take care of the environment rather than reading from a banner or poster.

A research that completed in New Zealand and Australia by Tan et al. (2016), examine the perception of consumer towards green product and green consumption. The research focuses on participants from a different level of green behaviour in order to see the factors that lead to green purchasing and the barrier occur in green consumption. Even though the results show that the consumer does not think that it is hard to be environmentally friendly, but they do have little trust in the environmentally friendly product since it is more expensive than the regular product. This research shows that price does

play an important role in promoting the environmentally friendly product to the customer.

In the United States, San Francisco has become the first city to legalize the supply and practice of plastic bags in 2007 and since then many other cities have applied the forbidden of free supply of plastic bags by the seller (Thomas, 2015). The city charge between five to twenty cents per carryout bag (paper or plastic) to those who insist to use one (California Against Waste, 2013). The result from this research shows that the behaviour adjustment among customers, restaurateurs and sellers occur on an extensive measure due to the use of reliable policy across local borders with effective outreach and education made at ease for customer and businesses (Thomas, 2015).

Local government in the United States of America is responsible to manage municipal solid waste (MSW) and tend to have an issue with single-use plastic bag waste; which leads to the implementation of various measures to overcome the situation (Wagner, 2017). In order to reduce the use of the single-use plastic bag, five-category has been implemented to different states in United State. However, due to the low recyclability of single-use plastic bags, the local government needed the extra cost to clean up plastic bag litter, to clean and protect storm water catchment basins and facing environmental problem due to marine litter (Wagner, 2017). According to the research done by Wagner (2017), prohibition of free single-use plastic bags supply is the most practical action needs to be practice in order to overcome this situation.

### **LOCAL GREEN CAMPAIGN**

Malaysia also has many green campaigns that meant to promote green lifestyle among people on a daily routine. One of the most popular green campaigns in Malaysia is No plastic bag campaign that was implemented at the supermarket and some government agencies such as Ministry of Health apply the campaign by not distributing plastic at all government pharmacies in Malaysia starting from the year

2012 (Umi Khalthum, 2013). This campaign is to encourage patients to bring their own bag when collecting medicine at the government pharmacies and at the same time reduce the use of plastic bag consumption.

Another campaign called PINTAR Go Green School is a collaboration of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) meant to emphasize the green education through internal and external activities as well as theory and hands-on exercise (Pintar Foundation, n.d.). This campaign is hoping to educate schoolchildren about climate change issues and how to practice as a green consumer.

One of the campaign that targeting younger generation that made by the government is the Green is a Lifestyle campaign that emphasizes on the younger generation to practice green lifestyle in a daily basis (Noor Atiqah, 2016). This campaign accentuates on recycle at home, saving water, electricity, and energy-efficient culture among youngster.

The government also focus on the industry in The Recycle for Nature campaign whereby participating companies will implement recycling culture at work will be compensated with “green points” according to the amount of waste that they managed to recycle at a certain time of period (Aruna, 2012). The points then will be converted to cash and the participating companies will be trained and stand a chance to win selected products based on their recycling behaviours.

### **NO PLASTIC BAG CAMPAIGN**

Penang Government starts their initiative in no plastic bag campaign every first Monday of the month in July 2009 (Penang: Say no, 2009) which meant to create a greener state towards the minimum use of plastic bag. Consumers are recommended bringing their own recycle bag and for those who insist on getting plastic bag will be charge twenty cents per plastic and it will be donated to the poor through State’s Partner against Poverty Fund (PAP). On 1st January 2011, the no plastic bag campaign has been launched statewide and every day is considered

as no plastic bag day (No plastic bags from January, 2010). Penang then became the first state in Malaysia to implement a “No Plastic Bag Day” campaign.

The Malaysia government aimed to promote environmentally friendly behaviour among Malaysian by promoting several green campaigns such as 3R campaign (reduce, reuse, recycle); Environmental education campaign and No Plastic Bag Day campaign (Masoumeh Hosseinpour, 2015). This is to ensure the implementation of green behaviour consumer among people is practice on daily basis. However, plastic and garbage problem is still the main issue even with numerous campaigns done by the government and non-governmental organization (NGO) in Malaysia.

According to Utusan Melayu newspaper (13.5 juta tan, 2017), every single house tends to produce garbage in everyday routine and a total of 37,000 tons of garbage is produced in Malaysia on a daily basis. This means that 13.5 million tons of garbage are produced in the year of 2016 alone. On top of that, the cost to manage the garbage was estimated to be up to RM2.2 billion a year. According to The Star newspaper (DAS, 2017), plastic makes up about 13 percent of a total solid waste stream that is generated in Malaysia each day.

One of the environmental campaigns that were first started in Malaysia was the 3R campaign (reduce, reuse, and recycle) back in 2007 where federal government take the responsibility for solid waste management and public cleansing (Ng et al., 2015). However, Solid Waste Management and Public Cleansing Corporation (SWCorp Malaysia) mentioned in The Star Online, that household waste through recycling is still low among Malaysians when the rate for last year only shows 17.5 percent was recycled from the large quota of solid waste being dumped in landfills (Low awareness on recycling, 2017).

According to Berita Harian, a statistic shown that from 1993 to the year 2000, only 5 percent recycle rate was achieved in Malaysia and the

objective that was set by the government is to get 22 percent recycling rate in the year 2020 (Kitar semula, 2017). Recycling is important in order to reduce the amount of garbage that will lead to oversupply at the garbage landfill site. Each garbage landfill site has their own life span depending on the size of the landfill and the frequent it being used (Fletcher, 2015). The more garbage generated will reduce the life span of garbage disposal sites. Overdue landfills are dangerous as it can produce highly toxic gases other than flu-born disease and mice issues (Kitar semula, 2017).

The No Plastic bag campaign that has been implemented in July 2009 at Penang state, however, has collected an amount of RM21, 403 from the twenty-cent plastic bag consumption (within five months), shows that consumer is willing to pay to get a plastic bag from retailers rather than carried their own recycle bag (No plastic for three days, 2009). According to The Star newspaper in Malaysian Digest (2017), until 2017, Penang government has collected more than RM3 million from the twenty-cent plastic bag consumption.

## OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to identify the understanding level of consumer towards campaign's objective. The research also hopes to identify the awareness level of consumer towards using plastic bags and the campaign. The research expects to relate the consumers' action/ behaviour towards the campaign and lastly is to analyze the attitude of consumer towards the campaign.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In general, campaign act as informative agendas, which emphasis on changing behavior (Coffman, 2002). To change people's behaviour is not an easy task and a well-structured campaign is compulsory to perform the task. To create a public awareness campaign, a detailed coordination and management are needed and this campaign tends to include various audiences, approaches and objectives that require a tight time limit and some degree of

responsibility for resources employed (Sayers, 2006).

According to Islam et al. (2010), the green campaign is one of campaign-style that aims at increasing public awareness about environmental degradation; and to teach people about the green behaviour. The perception of green behaviour in the society defined as habits or actions with which individuals take to defend their environmental or contribute to having a healthy one (Krajhanzl, 2010). Green behaviour can be performed in many ways such as recycling at home, switch to environmentally friendly product and save water and energy at home. Soonthonsmai (2007) mentioned that customer who is conscious and alarmed about the environmental issues are known as a green consumer.

Malaysian government tend to create many green campaigns in order to promote environmentally friendly lifestyle such as 3R campaign (reduce, reuse, recycle), Environmental Education campaign, No Plastic Bag campaign, and many more (Masoumeh Hosseinpour, 2015). Some of the campaigns collaborated with the Non-government organization in Malaysia in order to create awareness about green campaign locally.

One of the first campaign launched in Malaysia is the 3R campaign which was implement in order to reduce the solid waste production through reduce, reuse and recycle process. The campaign, which started in 2007, is not very effective when an only small percentage of contractors who implement their construction waste through 3R practice (Ng et al, 2015). One of the reasons why this happen is because the contractor only recycles and reuse common materials such as wood and steel; that only covers a small percentage of the total construction waste. Ng et al. (2015) suggest that all parties from the top down method need to be responsible in order to ensure the campaign success.

Another 3R research done by Norzafirah (2012) tend to focus on the effectiveness of 3R campaign between students at University Malaysia Pahang (UMP); also to understand the level of awareness of 3R campaign among students at University Malaysia Pahang (UMP), University Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) and University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK). The outcome from this research shows that 60 percent respondent is aware of the 3R campaign and another 40 percent does not aware of this campaign. However, even though the respondent is aware but their action to implement the 3R activity is still low. The main cause is because students are lacking in the education of sustainability and environmental issue; due to that, they do not have the responsibility and cannot see the relevance to support the campaign (Norzafirah, 2012).

Abdullah et al. (2016) did a research on the relationship between leader's awareness about green thought and the practice of green program in a firm. The research found that there is a relationship between leader's awareness and the application of the green concept in the marketing mix. The result shows that 71 percent of leaders are aware of recycling impact to the environment however not many activities implemented for the green program in the firm.

## METHODOLOGY

The study will be using the target-sampling method because of the similarities in the characteristics of the respondents and to ensure that the chosen sample represents the entire population (consumer in Penang). The study will target people who live in Penang from northeast and southwest of Penang Island. The respondent will be select based on opportunity sampling method; whereby the member of the population of interest was asked if they would take part in the research. This is a quick way of choosing participant but may provide a representative sample and could be biased.

A theoretical framework is a necessary guide for research. Without these organizing frameworks,

the research would be overwhelmed by the unconnected detail that would have to recall (Saunders et al., 2012). The framework of this study addresses the independent variables of some factors and their impacts on the credibility of the campaign as the dependent variable.

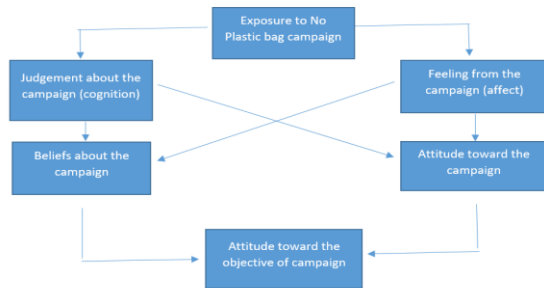


Figure 1: Attitude towards Ad Model of No Plastic Bag campaign.

The attitude towards ad model can be defined as a model that suggests; that a customer forms many feelings (affects) and judgments (cognitions) because of revelation to an advertisement, which, affect the customer's attitude to the ad and attitude to the brand (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). This model will able to identify the relationship between consumer understanding towards the No Plastic Bag campaign and their attitude after aware about the existing of the campaign.

This study contributes by extending and testing the theories, validating the conceptualizations and examining a theoretical model. The theory will show the relationship between the No Plastic Bag campaign with consumer's understanding, awareness and change of attitude. The result also will show whether the campaign did give impact to the consumer as expected by the campaign's objective.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper mainly offers a better understanding of the impact of No Plastic Bag campaign to the consumer in order to reduce the use of plastic in Penang Island. The results of the study will beneficial to the state government in order to see whether the consumer has educated via the campaign for the past eight years and can help to fill in any gaps missing in the campaign to make it more effective. Furthermore, it will enable the

authority to understand the behaviour of the consumer towards the effect of plastic bag to the environment; and creating a better campaign that suits the consumer in order to produce greener consumer in Penang Island.

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