Original Research Article

Factors Affecting Young Malaysians' Intention to Purchase Green Products

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Abstract

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Green marketing refers to holistic marketing concept in which it involves production, marketing, consumption and product disposal in a way that is less harmful to the environment. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of knowledge, perceived value, eco-label, and social influence on the intention of future green products purchasing among young Malaysian. The sample size of this study was 250 students. The results of this study showed that social influence have a relationship with young consumers' intention to purchase green products, however knowledge and eco-label had no influence. This research brings a better understanding on young consumers' intention towards future green purchasing in Malaysia.

Keywords: Consumers' Intention, Eco-label, Green Purchasing, Knowledge, Malaysia, Social Influence

INTRODUCTION

The force of going green has reached the Asian region, as more issues are threatening the environment exposing governments and local citizens to danger (Lee, 2008). In the Malaysian context Golnaz, Phuah, Zainalabidin, and Mad Nasir (2013) stated that the green concept is novel to Malaysian consumers although many campaigns that encourage people to go green have been carried out from time to time. The green products' market in Malaysia is still at its infancy stage, little knowledge about patterns of consumers' green consumption in Malaysia is available (Worthington and Patton, 2005).

Malaysian consumers have a different understanding about green products and the going green concept than consumers in western countries. People in the western countries view green products as these products that cause less harm to the environment and produce less pollution, while Malaysian understand green products as "specialty high price products" and tend to feel that these types of products are specific to a certain group of consumers (Shahnaei, 2012). Information group *Taylor Nelson Sofres* (TNS) and the global market insight conducted a survey in 2008 on the aspect of Malaysians' eco-friendliness of behaviors and habits, out of the sample, only 8% indicated that they have actually changed their attitude in a way the greatly benefits the

environment (Our Green World, 2008).

Product knowledge is one of the indicator factors that could explain about consumer behavior (Shahnaei, 2012). Furthermore, Manafi, Saeidinia, Gheshmi, Fazel, and Jamshidi (2011), and Hojabri et al., (2011) said that the inclusion of income, and knowledge is required when studying the factors that could have in impact on consumers' purchasing behavior. Moreover, Mostafa (2009) indicated that for a purchasing process to be successful, it would depend on several factors such as products' eco-label and social influence on buyers. However, there is a lack of study that investigates the factors in a comprehensive framework.

This study aims to find the relationship between consumers' intention to purchase green products and their knowledge about green products, eco-label and social influence.

Literature Review

Consumers' intention

Purchase intention refers to individual's intention to purchase a particular brand which they select for

themselves after performing some evaluations, there are several variables that could help in measuring purchasing intention such as brand, price and quality which will help in the actual purchasing activity in the future (Laroche et al., 1996; Hafeez and Muhamma, 2012). Having the intention to purchase a particular product requires an evaluation of other products in the market (Teng and Laroche, 2007).

An individual's intention to purchase falls under the decision of the reason why this individual wants to purchase a particular brand. Concepts such as taking into consideration about something, purchasing a particular brand, and anticipating buying a specific product helps in scoping the intentions of purchasing (Porter, 1974). Furthermore, Porter (1974) explained that a consumers' intention to buy a specific product does not get effected simply with his attitude towards that product, but also effects his future decisions to buy other brands that are set in his consideration.

Knowledge

Consumer's knowledge involves any information that is stays in one's memory. The information kept in a person's memory will affect his purchasing decision. This knowledge is categorized into three phases, knowledge of product, knowledge of purchase and knowledge of usage (Bray, 2008).

Image awareness and analysis is helps in searching for the product's knowledge. The impact of having knowledge on green products can effect on the usage and purchase of those environmentally friendly products. Kaiser and Schultz (2009) stated that having knowledge of the environment can help in turning individuals to environmentally sensitive people. Anderson, Wachenheim and Lesch (2007) found that a specific knowledge of the organic food's characteristics can be the key for purchasing those goods. According to Mohammad (2006), consumers process different information when they have purchase knowledge in order to acquire goods. The knowledge related to using the products impacts the information in the memory of how to apply goods and what is actually required to apply these goods.

Eco-label

Eco-labels refer to a product's collective overall environmental performance (Giridhar, 1998). They are indicators of the environmental performance of a product, developed to try to prevent consumers from being confused over claims of environmental friendliness (Childs and Whiting, 1998). Marketers are increasingly utilizing environmental labels in order to promote the products' identification (D'Souza, Taghian, and Lamb,

2006). Most of the studies that are concerned with eco-labels are searching of methods that could help making these products effective in the purchasing behavior of consumers that are associated with environmental safe products (D'Souza et al., 2006). Rashid (2009) stated that the eco-label awareness has a positive impact with green products knowledge and consumers' purchase intention. He also added that eco-labels of green products are useful instruments to attract consumers and inform them about the effects of their purchasing decision and the environment.

Social Influence

As Ryan (2001) mentioned, homophile refers to the social dynamic where an individual relates to others by having similar qualities. Kalafatis, Pollard, East, and Tsogas (1999) mentioned that social norms means whether an individual should perform a specific behavior or not in a specific point of view. It also can be understood as a particular situation where an individual shares him thought, values, and beliefs as he/she is com-municating with. When someone wants to purchase a certain cloth among adolescents, a peer's conformity is an essential facto (Chen-Yu and Seock, 2002). Lee (2008) added in his research that peer influence is the most indicating factor for adolescents' green purchasing behavior in Hong Kong compared to other factors. (Figure 1)

Hypothesis

H1: knowledge has a significant influence on young consumers' intention towards green purchasing in Malaysia
H2: Eco-label has a significant influence on young consumers' intention towards green purchasing in Malaysia.
H3: Social influence has a significant influence on young consumers' intention towards green purchasing in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

Research respondents

For the purpose of this research, the data was collected through the local students of Universiti Utara Malaysia, there are two reasons for choosing the local students as respondents; first reason due to the similarity of students' characteristics, while the second reason is that those students can be a perfect sample for young consumers as their ages range is between 18 and 25.
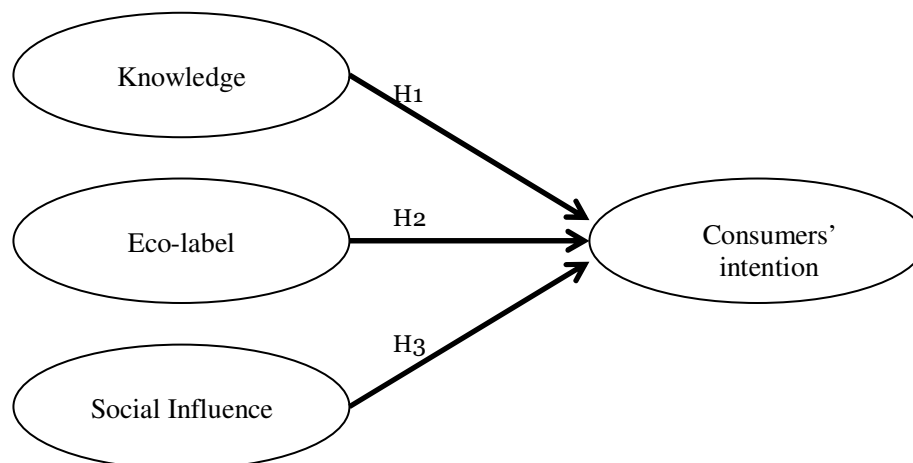
Framework

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographics	Categories	Frequency
Gender	Male	70
	Female	121
Age	Below 18	1
	Between 18 – 23	167
	Between 23 – 27	23
Ethnicity	Malay	94
	Chinese	73
	Indian	17
	Others	7

Table 1 illustrates the respondents' demographic profile. The majority of respondents are aged between 18 years old and 23 years old with a percentage of 87% and this result is expected as the majority of students in Universiti Utara Malaysia range within this age category. Only one respondent is under 18 years old, and 23 of them are between the age of 23 and 27 making a total of 12% of the sample. Regarding the respondents' gender, a lower number of male (70 or 36.6%) compared to (121 or 63.4%) of females represent the students in Universiti Utara Malaysia. This shows that there are more female students in the university compared to male. In terms of ethnicity, the majority of respondents are Malay (94 or 49.2%), followed by Chinese (73 or 38.2%), Indian (17 or 8.9%) and others (7 or 3.7%).

Reliability Test

A reliability analysis was run onto the dependent and independent variables, which consisted of knowledge, eco-label and social influence in order to find the reliability of each variable using Cronbach's alpha. Table 2 shows the alpha value for the six independent variables.

From the table above, we can notice that the cronbach's alpha for the dependent variable is .836, while for the independent variables range between .811 and .893, hence the mentioned cronbach's alpha values indicates that the reliability of all the variables together as well as the dependent and independent variables separately were considerably reliable and acceptable as suggested by Sekaran (2003).

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows the inter-correlational results among the studied variables. The results of the correlation analysis proved that a relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable exists. Starting with the intention to purchase green products, it is shown that there is a significant and positive relationship with all the independent variables namely knowledge about green products (r = 0.307), eco-label of green products (r = 0.547), and social influence (r = 0.441), at p < 0.01.

From this analysis, it can be concluded that eco-label exert the strongest and have a significant positive correlation with the intention (r = 0.457). The overall

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Value for Dependent and Independent Variables

Type of variable	Variables	Cronbach's alpha value
Dependent variable	Intention to purchase green products	.836
Independent variables	Knowledge about green products	.811
	Eco-label of green products	.814
	Social influence on consumers	.893

Table 3. Pearson Correlations of Study Variables (N = 191)

	Intention	Knowledge	Eco-label	Social influence
Intention	1			
knowledge	.307**	1		
Eco-label	.457**	.462**	1	
Social influence	.441**	.131	.382**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. Hypothesis Summary

Hypothesis	P	
H1: knowledge has a significant influence on young consumers' intention towards green purchasing in Malaysia.	.447	Not Supported
H2: Eco-label has a significant influence on young consumers' intention towards green purchasing in Malaysia.	.134	Not Supported
H3: Social influence has a significant influence on young consumers' intention towards green purchasing in Malaysia.	.000	supported

correlation coefficient values of the study variables range between 0.131 and 8.457 (p < 0.01), thus the results show a strong association between the dependent and independent variables.

Regression Analysis

Table 4 gives a summary for the hypothesis and indicates which variable has an influence on young consumers' intention to purchase green products in Malaysia as the coefficients for each model is tested. Two of the independent variables are not significant with p-value less than .05 (p < .05) which are: knowledge, and eco-label while the result shows that social influence has an influence on young consumers' intention to purchase green products in the future.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Taking the three dimensions that were studied in this research; knowledge, eco-label, and social influence, the results that came out showed that only one of the studied variables had a direct influence on young consumers' intention to purchase green products in Malaysia which is social influence. However, knowledge and eco-label did not show any direct influence.

The first result shows that there is insufficient knowledge on the importance of green products and green purchasing. As indicated earlier in the literature review of this research, many of the consumers in Malaysia view green products as specialty products that are specified for certain consumers (Shahnaei, 2012). This specific result shows that the importance of green products and their benefit to the environment should be exposed more to different consumers especially the young.

The results of the second variable namely eco-label shows that this indicator is very important as it can come from the fact that packaging of green products did not reach the level that catches young consumers' attention to what is inside these products. Another possibility is that this young generation doesn't see eco-label a determinant for their purchasing behavior, if these products had valuable information on their packaging of how beneficial and important they are but were priced highly, were difficult to find and were not recommended by their friends and families, apparently young consumers will still not pay much attention to them.

In terms of the only supported variable which is satisfaction, this shows how peer influence can play a major impact in shaping consumers' preferences, friends and family play a major role in consumers decision making process, hence it's important to educated earlier generations on the importance of green products in order

to have them influence the younger ones.

Limitations

This study was conducted on students in Universiti Utara Malaysia; which is located in a green supporting environment and is a public university. Other students in other universities could come out with different results as some universities are located in more urban locations which could have an effect on their perspective on the environment, while private universities contain young consumers who probably would have a stronger purchasing power. Therefore the findings of this study are unable to be generalized to all population of young consumers in Malaysia. Furthermore, this study examined only three variables that could influence young consumers' intention to purchase green products in Malaysia which are knowledge, eco-label, and social influence; however these variables are not the only determinants.

CONCLUSION

From this study we can understand the importance of green marketing, green products, and green purchasing. The main predictors of young consumers' intention to purchase green products in the future are social influence. With the strong family oriented culture, Malaysian consumers including those young ones may show more intention towards green purchasing when they see people in their surroundings doing that too.

In the other hand knowledge and eco-label showed that they don't have a significant influence on young consumers' intention towards future green purchasing, and this reveals many facts of how green marketing is operating and what steps should be taken to encourage more young consumers to go green.

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