

**FACTORS INFLUENCING PURCHASE
INTENTION TOWARDS GREEN CLOTHING
PRODUCTS: A STUDY AMONG GEN-Y
CONSUMERS IN SELANGOR, MALAYSIA**

JASON HONG KOK SIONG

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CLOTHING PRODUCTS: A STUDY AMONG GEN-Y CONSUMERS IN
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ABSTRACT

Environment issues such as climate change, pollution and waste management are key concerns which trigger the attention for societies and consumers toward the importance of green and preservation, resulting in them becoming more environmental conscious and specific-focus on green movement initiated by business companies. And as sustainability becomes the catchword for these companies, they began to redevelop organizational management strategies and strategic policies to be green-sustainably competitive. The concept of green sustainability is important in the fashion and apparel industry because their numerous practices have contributed significantly to the degradation of the environment with toxic wastes and pollution among others. Consequently, this has provided a good opportunity for apparel manufacturing and marketing companies to explore green-clothing products that incorporate green awareness in their competitive production and marketing operations. However, there are few studies done to examine the impact of purchase intention of Gen-Y consumers especially in Selangor, including the critical factors that influence their purchase intention toward green clothing products, hence the objectives of, and research questions raised in this study. This quantitative research garnered a total of usable 396 questionnaires responses from Gen-Y between 25 to 45 years old, processed with SPSS software, that produce the following results-analysis for the supported research hypotheses: Four factors (perceive behavior control, emotion, product attribute and price) have positive relationships with consumer purchase intention, but perceived behavior control had the strongest effect among the Selangor Gen-Y purchase intention of green products.

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The student has been supervised by: Assoc Prof. Dr. Oo Yu Hock

The thesis has been examined and endorsed by:

Professor Dr. Asif Mahbub Karim

Dean, Graduate School

Binary University of Management & Entrepreneurship

Examiner 1

Professor Dato' Dr. Sayed Mushtaq Hussain

DBA Co-Ordinator School of Management

Asia e University

Examiner 2

This thesis was submitted to Asia e University and is accepted as fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

Name Candidate: Jason Hong Kok Siong

Signature of Candidate:

Date: 1 September 2022

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AT	Attitudes
DV	Dependent Variables
EK	Environmental Knowledge
EM	Emotion
GA	Green Advertising
Gen-Y	Generation Y
IV	Independent Variables
UN	United Nations
PA	Product Attributes
PI	Purchase Intention
PL	Place
PR	Price
ROIs	Return on Investments
SN	Subjective Norms
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
TPA	Theory of Reasoned Action
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The Nielsen Global Survey (2015) on 51-country consumer sustainability behavior has revealed that about 90% of Malaysians are concerned about environmental issues, but the majority are not willing to change their buying behavior, so much so that Sharaf, Isa, and Al-qasa (2015) had concluded that most Malaysians tend to perceive green products as high-priced goods meant for high net-worth consumers in comparison with non-green products, thus their reluctance to indulge in, voluntarily or otherwise in activities and declared pursuits of the latter. Even when the Government of Malaysia has introduced several initiatives over time to promote sustainability-driving actions to motivate its citizens, for example, by encouraging them to increase their usage of green products with limited promoting incentives, the enthusiastic participation or response is low and slow. A case in point is the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water (KeTTHA), established in the year 2009, to endorse green products and encourage consumers to consider using and consuming eco-friendly products. However, this initiative did not have the expected impact on Malaysian purchasing intention and behavior especially among the Gen-Y.

In the context of Malaysia, the Generation Y (Gen-Y) – as a growing section of Malaysia's youthful population, comprise individuals below the age of 36 years of age who are reportedly more concerned about the environment more so than their parents and elders before them. As such, according to Naderi and Van Steenburg (2018), their perceptions on the importance of buying green and anticipated or actual behavior to buying green may contribute to reinforcing the need and urgency to

recycling wastes for green production. The latter, earlier observed by Norazah Mohd (2013), as a contributing factor that damages the environment and causes health hazards, must be redressed soonest to enable and facilitate the movement toward go-green and green purchasing. Nevertheless, according to Azila et al. (2012), a survey of 616 respondents reported that only 30 per cent have had the experience of buying green products does not provide a promising picture of the green-commitment by then Malaysian Gen-Y consumers. In summary, according to Tan, Ojo, and Thurasamy (2019), there is a low-level awareness and practice of green-products purchase among Malaysian young consumers who may have limited knowledge of or inclined to be active purchase-intention consumers at this point in time.

Rapid economic-consumption growth therefore over the few decades, according to Jaiswal and Kant (2018), has caused environmental deterioration through over consumption and over-utilization of natural resources. As a consequence, consumers, businesses, and governments are faced with the biggest challenge of preserving natural resources and protecting the environment. This phenomenon, observed earlier by Lee, Wahid, and Goh (2013) and Vazifehdoust, Taleghani, Esmaeilpour, Nazari, and Khadang (2013), included the problems of ozone depletion and air pollution, global warming and haze, and health-hazard solid wastes. Relatedly, over-consumption and over-utilization of resources are linked, directly or indirectly to the challenges of production and distribution aspects which, according to Li, Liu, Wang, and Liu (2016), are related to marketing-retailing chains of businesses worldwide. For example, the thriving billion-dollar businesses of the textile and clothing industry controls an extensive global marketing-retailing chain of unique niche and common wholesale lines of products that have contributed, wittingly and unwittingly, environment-questionable practices in the past-but-present correcting

green-driven sustainable environment-friendly practices. Consequently, Jacobs, Petersen, Hörisch, and Battenfeld (2018) have lamented that, production of and marketing green clothing products that can improve various aspects of sustainability, have started to capture some significant attention of environment-friendly consumers but the market share of green clothing products produced in environment-friendly way and socially responsible ways is still lagging behind. A nagging issue is the lack of a wide range of green-products although increasingly the market segmentation in this area of potential business is encouragingly visible more so today than before.

1.2 Background of the Study

Environmental issues such as global warming, reduction of stratospheric ozone layer, pollution of water, noise pollution, light and acid rain are common and publicly announced globally and rapidly, with internet and technological connectivity, with inconsiderate and indiscriminate economic development, among one of the continuing serious causes of environment-damaging and climatic-change issues including depletion of natural resources ((Bhate and Lawler, 1997; Joshi and Rahman, 2016). In short, according to Thieme, Royne, Jha, Levy, and McEntee (2015), and repeated in various articulations by many environmentalists and volunteer organizations, the environment-economic overtures in developing and growing human and related business enterprises, compounded by an increasing population have eventually damaged and degraded Nature's environment. The effect of environmental degradation and destruction is borderless but the calamities that follow are frighteningly and death visible which, according to Said, Ahmadun, Paim, and Masud, as early as in their 2003 writings, have affected negatively to the chagrin of generations to come. Without immediate action-driven plans and management systems to arrest the declining quality of life by seriously preserving, protecting and conserving

disrupted and damaged eco- systems, these earth-destruction and its degraded environmental issues will continue to decline to the detriment of all human societies without exception. In essence, the earth-world is sick and needs healing and considerate care to recover and replenish itself to serve humankind. All over the world, organizations and peoples must respond and cooperate, with ready-made agendas for sustainable world and living programs by United Nations and other international organizations to “heal the globe” of climatic-environment transforming changes that affect all aspects of life, living, livelihood and global enterprises and its networks of visible and invisible chains of production, distribution, storage and retailing to reach the over-consuming lifestyles of growing human avarices in “throw-away” apathetic habits that are continually destroying our planet.

Despite numerous efforts, nationally, regionally and internationally to conserve, protect and heal the disrupted and depreciated environment, the “throw-away” and “eat-discard” plastic-wraps and containers of fast-food or takeaway consumption preferences or habits have been relentless in piling heaps of waste disposals at dumpsites and landfills that constantly remind us of the sinful and indifferent attitudes and behaviors in our daily existence. For example, the efficacy of the precautionary measures adopted on sustainable counter-measures to reduce the decaying and sick environment is questionable. In essence, regulating uncontrolled and disruptive development activities through, among others, national and international Environment Protection Agency policy initiatives and governance compliance to conserve natural environment and ensure safe human health must be reviewed constantly and its strategic actions revised periodically, not as-and-when the need such as disasters occur. More specifically, many overlapping legislative initiatives directed at solving issues such as releases of harmful gases into the

atmosphere until the late 1980s and “the Earth Decade” or “Decade of the Environment” of the 1990s that have reinforced increasing environmental awareness and protests among consumers such as the activists from numerous vociferous non-profit organizations (NGOs), according to Kalafatis, Pollard, East, and Tsogas (1999) are outdated for timely reformation. And this includes what McIntosh, 1990; Wüstenhagen and Bilharz (2006) have been repeatedly asserting being “have been articulations” no longer effective such as, among others, the national and international legislation on environment preservation and conservation, the depreciated values of media coverages on tapering environmental issues of the past with arrested aging repairs no longer efficacious to deal with current more vociferous environmental disasters, and the declining frail voices of environmentalism among a greying community of consumers. Efforts by governments and nations are no lacking but these are often insufficient in terms of compliance and enforcement practices to ensure effective and efficient action-driven results of conservation, protection and healing are achieved

In general, there is a rapid increase in consumer-awareness orientation on climatic and environmental issues. Such awareness of the destruction of natural resources are usually associated with environment-protection and environment-conservation issues which, in turn, has created eco-friendly consumption called “green consumerism” Educated consumers are increasingly environment conscious-responsive about how their consumption activities, with more available knowledgeable and exemplary practices of damage-disaster repairs of flood mitigation and hill-slopes landscaping solutions to nurse depreciated natural environments, the latter has been compounded by indiscriminate disposal of products, purchases and consumption materials that over-flow landfills and clog-up drainage systems that

continue to negatively impact upon the environment. Hence, green consumer environmentalism that ensue reparable and re-nurtured environments have become more popular and acceptable throughout the world (Punyatoya, 2015; Moisander, 2007; McIntosh, 1990).

Numerous countries across the globe are beginning to heed this threat and they have started working towards minimizing the harmful impact of their business activities on the environment. International companies have acknowledged the need to become more ecological conscious-action driven. According to Joshi and Rahman (2016), Thieme et al. (2015), Cheah and Phau (2011) and Pickett-Baker and Ozaki (2008), this phenomenon has egged multi-national corporations, product manufacturers, academics and other stakeholders to execute and reform strategic landmark guidelines to convert environment-awareness agendas into market opportunities to be exploited.

Researchers of environment-friendly organizations have recommended converting recycled material-attributes into a type of competitive business advantage that offers new avenues for higher employee commitment, customer satisfaction, and achievement of higher market shares and profitability. In addition, the availability of increasing green products in the marketplace with these companies applying more green practices as part of the marketing strategies, has captured the imagination and interest of the public consumers. Thus, going green also means that these organizations are able to further enhance positive brand images of their businesses. Subsequently, most consumers are likely to think and behave likewise as the organizations do (Booi Chen and Teck Chai, 2010; Luo, X. and Bhattacharya, 2006; Maignan and Ferrell, 2001; Menguc and Ozanne, 2005; Punyatoya, 2015; Rothenberg and Matthews, 2017; Gam, 2011).

Environmentally responsible purchasing therefore is vital, and unplanned purchasing of goods that can severely damage the environment must be reformed. Consumers possess the capability to prevent or decrease environmental damage by purchasing green products. As a result, green movement and environmental protection practices have found a place among consumers especially those using green clothing products which, in turn, help maintain efficient energy, reduce water pollution and toxic waste, recycling material sources and many more which do not harm the environment. Green products also provide better air quality indoors and free from chemicals which can reduce health problems. Consumers now are more prepared and willing to purchase green products that are not harmful to the environment (Y. S. Chen, 2010).

Environmental issues can be caused by production practices and the ways of consumption by consumers indirectly or directly (Tsen et al., 2006). Since the industry and consumers have caused the problems, then both of them have to find for solutions. The environment degradation caused by humans has enlarged the prominence of responsible role of numerous parties including consumers, governments, institutions, media and companies (Carrete, Castaño, Felix, Centeno, and González, 2012). (Grunert and Juhl, 1995) mentioned that consumers' household purchases solely were already accountable to 40% of the environmental damages. Any case, overconsumption can also hurt the natural environment and human beings' quality of life in the long-term (Felix and Braunsberger, 2016).

In addition, researches such as the works of Konuk (2015), Yadav and Pathak (2017) and Jansson, Marell, Trivedi, Patel, and Savalia (2015), Nordlund (2010) and D'Souza et al. (2006) have lamented the limited researches done on green purchasing intention and behavior. As such, the theoretical and practical gaps here need to be

bridged because it is necessary to understand consumer purchase intention, for example, in Malaysia from the business perspective in which there is still a lot of market-space for improvement. Green products are known as environmental-friendly products which cause minimum disruptive effect on the environment. They have also been defined as environmental-friendly products which have minor impact on the natural environment and are harmless to human health; they are quality-assured products that protect the environment by using natural ingredients. Malaysia is one the country which strongly support the concept of green application in the nation.

Green products have become more important since 1970 especially in 1990s due to the increasing concerns for environment and society. In a classic by Antil (1984), he had defined that environmental-friendly products are produced, consumed or disposed in ways which are less harmful to the environment. On the one hand, green products or environmental-friendly products do not contain harmful elements, hence they are friendlier to the environment. On the other hand, socially conscious consumers are individuals who care about the consequences caused to the public by their own consumption, and they usually have high-level environmental consciousness (Borin, Cerf and Krishnan, 2011; Frederick E. Webster, 1975; Mohd Suki and Mohd Suki, 2015). Therefore, they are often associated with certain product purchases with minimum negative environmental consequences, following what Follows and Jobber (2000) and Moser (2015) had advocated as changing daily-consumption behavior to improve and resolve environment-conservation issues.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Environmental issues, caused by inconsiderate business response-to-demand production practices and the indiscriminate lifestyle consumption by consumers, constitute a major problem of both industry stakeholders and public consumers at

large; the former driven by business and profit-bent motives and the latter driven by increasing demands for more than essential-type consumption to feed unsaturated and emerging non-essential (luxury and niche) consumption. Furthermore, the pace of environmental degradation caused by humans is wittingly or unwittingly compounded by numerous other parties including governments, institutions, media and companies who, directly or indirectly, compound environment and human issues through their respective or combined policy provisions and action agendas. In short, overconsumption in modern societies nationally and globally have compounded the rape and degradation of natural environment and depreciated the health and quality of human life for many years now.

There is a discrepancy or “gap” between consumer-expressed favorable attitudes and actual purchasing practices in the green purchase intention and behavior of consumers including government policies and business practices of domestic and foreign companies in terms of local and foreign direct investments in various types of business and trade activities. But, more importantly, is the attitudinal and behavioral attributes of producers and consumers in the supply-demand chain. For instance, while many consumers have shown a positive attitude towards purchases of organic food products, only a small number of consumers actually purchase them, suggesting that consumers have expressed their concerns for the environment but ironically they seldom translate them into active green-purchase consumers. This gap widens further as the pace of articulated willingness to purchase environment-friendly products or green products increases without a corresponding pace to convert into articulation into action, that is, words of interest-support of green products do not translate into action-purchases as well.

Furthermore, the majority of consumers have not realized their potential power in making a difference to reform negative environmentalism into positive recovery or rehabilitation of degraded and damaged environment by over-consumption practices fanned by ever-responding supply-production chain activities in the business interest of MNC corporations locally and overseas. Moreover, it is a burden on and unfair to the government to confront the myriad of environmental-economic challenges alone, politics aside; both the business communities and consumers at large should be more involved actively to resolve the shared environmental issues – a phenomenon not completely resolved yet. Invariably, formulating laws and regulatory legislations alone are still not enough to address environmental issues effectively because outdated policy- requirements regulations must be reviewed and reformed, with new compliance governance being introduced as necessary to create a balance needed to match changing societal needs and lifestyle-demand of people for better quality living and livelihood standards.

There is a culture bias in the current research findings based on the “Euro – American” context of high-awareness among its green-driven consumers which cannot be used to justify the lack of, and the need to improve, similar environment-friendly awareness in developing or emerging countries including Malaysia. This is because environmental awareness in Asian markets is recent and more market research needs to be done. And particularly there are very limited researches done on green purchasing intention and behavior of demand-driven consumers in Asia. Unless the crucial aspect on how Asian (and more Malaysian) consumers make their choices on green product such as green clothing products is pursued more consistently and in full blast, with environmental concerns blended into the mainstream marketing, the clarion call and effort to focus on green products purchases and related environment-friendly actions