

Generation X and Purchase Intention Toward Green Cosmetic and Skin Care Products

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Abstract

The significant increase of green awareness among people throughout the world has created tremendous implications on the cosmetics industry. However, in Malaysia, the market for green cosmetics and skin care is still in its infancy. Consequently, this study had been undertaken to investigate generation X's behavior in purchasing green products which is crucial since they form one of the biggest target groups among cosmetic users. Thus, this study examines Malaysia's Generation X consumers' purchasing intention for green cosmetics and skin care products. Specifically, the current study examines the relationship of psychological factors of consumer values i.e. health consciousness, environmental consciousness, self-image consciousness among generation X's attitude towards purchase intention of green cosmetics and green skin care in Malaysia. The results of the regression analyses showed that health consciousness has significant relationship with attitude towards the purchasing of green cosmetics and skin care products. However, the reverse was found on environmental consciousness and self image that indicated no relationship to purchase intention. Consequently, attitude factor was found to mediate the relationship between consumer values and green purchase intention. In addition, the findings from the analyses also revealed that past purchase experience was the most significant determinant to purchase intention. This study implies that producers of green products must be able to convey their green message to the intended target market, especially when these groups are actively engaged in environmental practices and issues. Future researches should consider a nationwide survey covering samples from other generation groups as well as be gender based which would be more significant in making a generalization.

Keywords: Purchase Intention, Attitudes, Consumer Values, Green Marketing, Green Cosmetic.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Green marketing had been introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Cohen, 2001). Since then, a serious of green marketing appeared with a rapid increase in consumer awareness for green products. The green consumer behavior had jumped into another stage, where the green consumers' thoughts and actions were linked (Akehurst, 2012). Today's consumers have started to become aware and realized about their responsibilities and roles towards the environment (Cherian, 2012). Cherian found that the significance for global sustainable business practices by corporations had defined to be a fact of overall increase in the consumer awareness from the lack of environmental protection and social inequities. It is also found that the environmental sustainability concepts were shown by the applications of corporate strategy, consumer choice, student education and academic research (Cherian, 2012).

Green products can be defined as products which are typically non-toxic, made from recycled materials, or minimally packaged (Ottman, 1998; Pavan, 2010). Pavan (2010) has stated that "green products" and "environmental products" are business terms that are used commonly to explain products which protect or enhance the natural environment by conserving energy or resources and reducing or avoiding the use of toxic agents, pollution, and waste. In Malaysia, companies such as "The Body Shop", has implemented green marketing onto its product in terms of acting against animal testing. Cheah (2009) found that the demand for green products has increased in Malaysia. With regard to that, it is encouraging for this study to investigate what drives Malaysia's Generation X to purchase green

products since Generation X would give great value to the green marketing campaign due to their high potential market.

From a previous study, people who were less aware of using green products led to the unwillingness of paying for higher prices (Bukhari, 2011). Lee (2008) posited that adolescent green behavior was reflected more by the factors such as social influence, environmental concern, self-image and efficacy. It was also confirmed that green behavior can also be influenced by the factors of effective green marketing strategies (Thanika, 2012). However, there were limited studies that showed the values and attitudes of Generation X towards purchasing green cosmetics and green personal care in Malaysia. A previous study by Añaña (2007) showed that values can be the references that are used by people to evaluate themselves and others which influence their attitudes. Consequently, it was found that attitudes can be a mediator in the value-attitude-behavior relationship as the possibility for direct influence of values on behavior was small (Nepomuceno, 2010). Another study by Hee (2011) found that attitude was also considered as a mediator among values i.e. health consciousness, environmental consciousness and self- image consciousness towards purchase intention as it was found to be of importance in previous studies. Therefore, there is a gap whether values can give direct influence on behavior to purchase or attitude must be a mediator between values towards purchase intention.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

American Marketing Association (AMA) defined green marketing as products that are presumed environmental friendly and which should not be harmful for the society. Patil (2012) conjured that green marketing would give benefits and implications towards the environment, product development, natural resources proper utilization, technological development, corporate sectors and also to the industries. The marketers seem to be aware of the trends in the natural environment included the shortage of raw materials, especially water, the increased cost of energy, pollution levels increment and the changing of the role of governments (Kottler, 2012). According to Yakup (2011), green marketing would give advantage to businesses to ensure profitability, sustained long term growth, competitive advantages and could stand for a good company to work in terms of an environmentally responsible company. This has been supported by Erica (2010), especially by choosing the targeting consumers wisely and determining the products appropriately. Green marketing can benefit the green firms in terms of maximizing the green-pricing premium. At the same time, green marketing would also give incentives for non-green companies to go green. Erica (2010) also stated that consumers will respond differently towards the green companies based on their level of environmental consciousness. However, the green consumer behavior has jumped into another stage, where the green consumers thought and actions are linked (Akehurst, 2012). The cosmetics industry had transformed to be more concerned on eco-products due to the growth of consumer response on the trends for a healthier lifestyle and demand for products more naturally (Vesselina, 2009). According to Alice (2008), factors that contributed consumers to become involved with eco-conscious beauty was derived from the consumer's passion on natural, environmentally responsible-ingredients and organic-food movement. The consumer consciousness has influenced the motivation and knowledge exchange between customers and organizations to innovate the natural cosmetics products. Consumers are more concerned on the products unique attribute and this knowledge exchange will eventually benefit the organizations in terms of profitability (Vesselina, 2009).

Cheah (2009) found that the demand for green products has increased in Malaysia. According to Ooi (2012), the determinants that affect the green purchase intention of consumers in Malaysia was the government's initiative, followed by environmental knowledge, peer pressure and environmental attitude. With regard to that, this study will investigate what drives Malaysia's Generation X to purchase green products. Furthermore, according to Lee (2009), a study on Generation X would give great value to green marketers due to their high potential market. According to Akehurst (2012), the psychographic variables would be more effective to measure the ecologically conscious consumer behavior rather than the demographic variables analyzed (sex, age, education and income). This has been supported by Lee (2008), in the study of identifying the effective factors in motivating Hong Kong's younger generation to engage in green purchasing behaviors. The findings showed

that the demographic variables' are not relevant to predict the Generation X's green purchasing behavior. Moreover, Generation X's green behavior is reflected by the factors of social influence, environmental concern, self-image and efficacy. Nelson (2012) posited, psychographic variables can be predicted by understanding consumers' values and attitudes, environmental consciousness, and self-image. In addition, consumers also react positively in consuming organic foods as part of their healthy lifestyle. The health consciousness influenced consumer behavior intentions towards green products (Mei, 2009).

Hypothesis 1: Health consciousness has positive relationship towards purchasing green cosmetics and green skin care.

Hypothesis 2: Environmental consciousness has positive relationship towards purchasing green cosmetics and green skin care.

Hypothesis 3: Self-Image consciousness has positive relationship towards purchasing green cosmetics and green skin care.

Based on the Ajzen (1980) theory, it can be stated that the attitude towards the action is considered to be a function of the salient beliefs about relevant attributes and perceived consequence of performing the behavior, as well as of the person's evaluation of the attributes and consequences. The Theory is termed as Reasoned Action since it has been determined that people normally consider the implications of their action before they decide to perform or not a given behavior. Referring to a previous study by Booi (2011), a specific attitude towards specific types of environmental behavior has been measured and its result was consistent with other previous studies that determines attitude which can be predicted positively with the green purchasing behavior.

Hypothesis 4: Attitude as a mediator of the consumer values and has positive relationship towards intention to purchase green cosmetics and green skin care.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was developed partly and adapted based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1975) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) model to illustrate the determinants of intentions to buy green cosmetics and green skin care products among Generation X. Figure 1 below shows the TPB Model by Ajzen (1975).

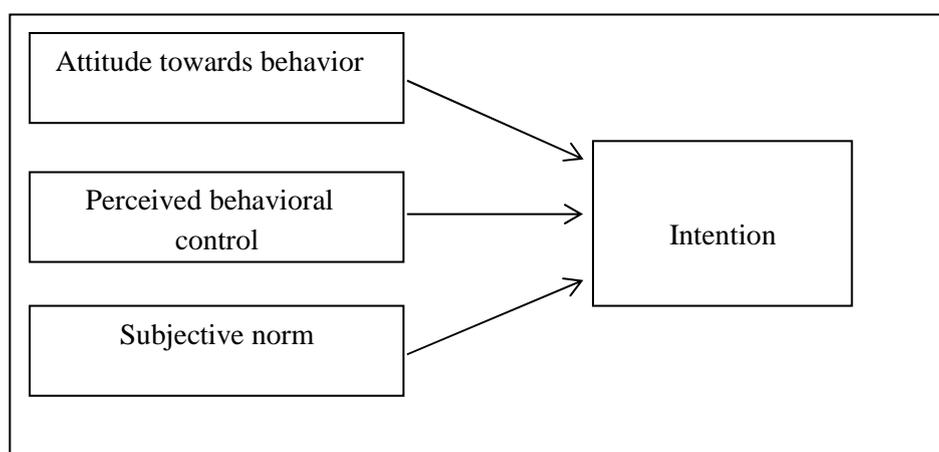


Figure 1: Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991)

Rahman (2011) and Lee (2008) had applied environmental attitude, government initiative, peer

pressure and green purchase intention as the variables based on the TRA model to test the green purchase behavior among Malaysian consumers. The measurement of variables includes the customer's value consisting of health consciousness, environmental consciousness, and self-image consciousness. The consumer values provide an overall measure of attitude about purchasing cosmetics and green skin care products. The TPB model is a reliable and predictive model that can clearly investigate consumers' intentions to buy environmental friendly products. Thus, the framework has been developed to show the relationship between these factors of purchase intentions.

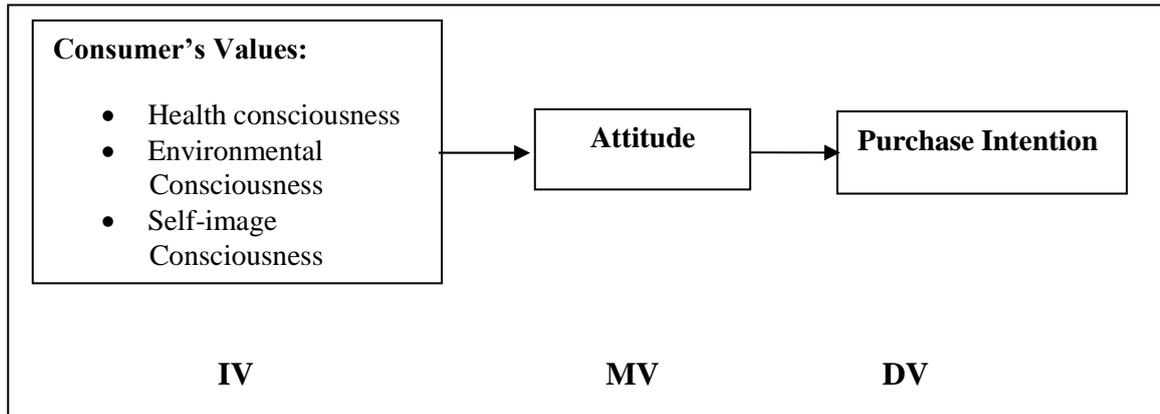


Figure 2: Research Framework

4.0 Research Methodology

The target population for this study consisted of the respondents from three universities around Klang Valley, specifically University Technology Mara, University of Malaya and Uinar International University with a total of 200 responses. This is sufficient because according to Sheridan (2007), a minimum of five subjects per variable is required for factor analysis and a sample of 100 subjects is acceptable but sample sizes of 200+ are preferable. Therefore, 30 questions for 200 respondents are sufficient to be represented. For this study, a self administered questionnaire was distributed to collect individual data on the respondents. A total of five items were used to measure consumer values towards the intention to purchase green cosmetics and green skin care product which included five items for each variables (i.e. health consciousness, environmental consciousness, self-image consciousness, attitude, purchase intention) which was adapted from Kim (2011) and Lee (2008) and had been measured using Five-point Likert scales which range from strongly disagree (=1) to strongly agree (=5).

The demographic measurement is taken regarding five items (i.e. gender, age, ethnicity, education level and household income). It will be measured using descriptive data.

Data Analysis and Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

From the Table 1 shown below, the total respondents were 200 people. Majority of the respondents were female (70%) and the remaining were male (30%). More than 90 percent of the respondents were above 16 years until below 25 years old, is shown in table 4.2. The ethnicity was (92%) Malay since the data was collected from University Technology MARA (UiTM) which possesses 100% Bumiputra while other ethnicities were collected from University of Malaya and Uinar International University. Degree holders have the largest numbers who participated in this study (53%) followed by Diploma (19%) and STPM (14.5%) as shown in table 4.2. The table also states that the household income of below RM2000 is the highest (54%), followed by the respondents having household income RM2001 to RM4000 (30%) and RM4001 to RM6000 (10%), whereas only a few respondents earn RM6001 onwards as their household income.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENT %
GENDER		
Male	60	30
Female	140	70
AGE		
Below 16	4	2
16 - 20	135	67.5
21 -25	58	29
Above 25	3	1.5
ETHNIC		
Malay	184	92
Chinese	10	5
Indian	3	1.5
Others	3	1.5
EDUCATION		
PMR	1	0.5
SPM	26	13
STPM	29	14.5
DIPLOMA	38	19
DEGREE	106	53
INCOME		
Below 2000	108	54
2001 - 4000	60	30
4001 - 6000	20	10
6001 - 8000	5	2.5
8001 - 10000	5	2.5
Above 10001	2	1

Table 2: Variable Means Score of Consumer Values

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Environmental Consciousness	20.61	2.59
Self-Image Consciousness	20.16	2.82
Health Consciousness	20.65	2.38

Testing of Hypotheses

Firstly, to answer the first objective of the research, testing of Hypothesis 1 (H1), Hypothesis 2 (H2) and Hypothesis 3 (H3) is conducted. To examine the relationship between consumer values i.e. health consciousness (HC), environmental consciousness (EC) and self-image consciousness (SC)) and attitude (ATT) towards green personal care and cosmetic products (H1 – H3), the linear regression analysis was used.

Table 3: Health Consciousness and Purchase Intention

	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig
HC	0.085	0.115	1.627	0.105
R=0.115 R Square=0.013 Adj R Square=0.008				
df=198 F=2.646				

Table 4: Environmental Consciousness and Purchase Intention

	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig
EC	0.077	0.245	3.562	0.000
R=0.245 R Square=0.060 Adj R Square=0.055				
df=198 F=12.684				

Table 5: Self-Image Consciousness and Purchase Intention

	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig
SC	0.072	0.101	1.426	0.156
R=0.101	R Square=0.010	Adj R Square=0.005		
df=198	F=2.033			

To conclude the hypotheses, it is found that HC ($\beta= 0.115, p= 1.05$), EC ($\beta= 0.245, p= 0.000$) and SC ($\beta= 0.101, p= 0.156$), which means, only environmental consciousness (EC) significantly influenced Generation X towards buying green cosmetics and skin care products. Thus, H2 is supported in this study while H1 and H3 were rejected.

This finding is similar to HeeYeon Kim's (2011) study where only environmental consciousness was found to be significant in predicting whether consumers' purchase green product in the Malaysian context. However, the finding is contrasted with Lee (2009), who stated that adolescent green behavior was reflected more by the factors such as social influence, environmental concern, self-image and efficacy. This result was not supported by Booi (2011), who argued that green purchase behaviors' were not influenced, by the consumer's environmental attitude. The finding was also contrasted with Shaharudin (2010) who argued that consumers' concern on their health consciousness is commonly stated factors in forming a positive attitude toward organic foods. According to Nabsiah (2011), due to the complexity in consumers' green purchasing behavior, the result findings are varied depending on different cultures, time and geographical contexts.

Secondly, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to test Hypothesis 4 (H4), which is based and adapted on the model of Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). To perform hierarchical multiple regression analysis, the independent variables were entered into 3 steps. The result is shown in table 4.8.

Table 6: Attitude as a Mediator of the Consumer Values and Purchase Intention

Model	R	R Square	Adj Square	R	Std. Error	Beta	F Change	df	Sig
1	0.200	0.040	0.035		2.827	0.140	8.287	198	0.004
2	0.259	0.067	0.058		2.794	0.175	5.713	197	0.001

The variables of this study i.e. health consciousness, environmental consciousness, self-image consciousness, attitude, purchase intention and consumer value were accessed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and the reliability level is ranged from 0.738 to 0.843. Under the comparison of variable means scores, respondents rated consumer values of health consciousness ($M=2.65, SD=2.38$) which has the highest consumer values mean, followed by the environmental consciousness ($M=20.61, SD=2.59$). This means that health consciousness has the most important factor towards Generation X. And to conclude the hypotheses, it is found that, HC ($\beta= 0.115, p= 1.05$), EC ($\beta= 0.245, p= 0.000$) and SC ($\beta= 0.101, p= 0.156$). There is only environmental consciousness (EC) significantly influenced Generation X towards buying green cosmetics and skin care products. Thus, H2 is supported in this study, while H1 and H3 were rejected. H4 is supported in this study in which attitude

can be a mediator of the consumer values and has positive relationship towards intention to purchase green cosmetics and green skin care. It made a statistically significant contribution, 0.001 (less than 0.05) and supported to be the perfect mediator as Consumer Value and ATT increased the contribution of variance at 2.3% in purchasing intention. Thus, it can be concluded that the model of TPB has proved the robustness, where consumer's attitude is correlated with purchase intention on green personal care and cosmetic products.

The data also confirmed that attitude predicts the customers' intention to purchase green cosmetics and green skin care products. This result is consistent with the findings from Kim (2011) which claimed that purchasing experience has a positive relationship with the intention to buy organic personal care products. This research also shows that attitudes can be a mediator in the value-attitude-behavior relationship as mentioned by Nepomuceno (2010). However, the result contrasted with Baker's (2008) stating that general attitudes were not led to pro-environmental action and typically subjective interest with the relationship between values and behavior and confirmed that there is a gap between consumers' beliefs and behaviors' towards being green. Overall, the TPB model had proven the robustness of the model, where consumer's attitude is correlated with purchase intention on green personal care and cosmetic products.

6.0 Conclusions and Implications

The cosmetic industry is a very fast paced industry where product innovation is the key to success (Sameer, 2006). In today's extreme competitive landscape, businesses demand continuous innovation and sustainable core competency to survive in the market. To outpace from the competition, fulfilling consumers' demand is the main key to win market shares or penetrating into new markets.

Marketers have presumed that green product has emerged to become the direction for future product development and it is the answering call from public to conserve the environment due to extensive pollution and waste creation from corporations. However, as the literature review has shown that most of consumers' purchasing green products are actually based on personal needs and lifestyles, rather than buying them due to environmental reasons. It is vital for marketers to realize the underlying reason of why consumers should choose green products rather than conventional products. As such, the present research intends to contribute knowledge and insights into this area by studying the determinants of purchasing intention for green cosmetics and green cosmetics products. As for managerial implications, it is an added advantage for the producers of green product and services to be able to convey their green message to the intended target market. This crucial point of market segmentation by a company with different marketing strategies needs to be applied to different segmentations (Lee, 2008). With reference to the consumers' value from this study as well as from the contracting and similarity with some previous studies, it can be suggested that Malaysian consumers not only emphasize on the internal benefits for cosmetics and skin care products as a health factor, but external factors, specifically the environmental factor, are also important priorities. Hence, it is suggested to marketers that other than focusing on environmental issues to market green products, the combination of health and self-image enhancement messages should be employed as well in order to generate more response from the market. In addition, according to the present research results, Theory of Planned Behavior model has proven to be a useful framework to predict consumer purchasing intention for green products.

7.0 Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the sample size which was too small (N=200) due to the constraints in cost allocated and time to complete the project. Respondents were selected by using simple random sampling. Thus, data had been collected presenting all Generation X in the Klang Valley, Malaysia, but limit to the randomly selected university students which were University of Malaya, University Technology Mara and Unitar International University. Thus, the result might not be very inclusive and biased. In addition, this study is only limited to Generation X respondents where it could also be relevant to other generations such as Generation Y and Baby Boomers. The second limitation of this study was the scope of the sample which is limited to three universities. Due to this uneven distribution, it is expected that the results of this study are not free from biasness. Since this research focuses more on green purchasing intention of green cosmetics and skin care product, the findings of this study may not be suitable to be used with other product categories.

8.0 Recommendation for Future Research

Future research should be done including other important variables such as perceived behavior control and subjective norm as in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991). It could be suggested to use other sampling methods since random sampling method that had been used in this study might not be effective in presenting the purchase pattern of all Malaysians. Since this research focuses more on green purchase intention of green cosmetics and skin care products, the findings of this study might not be suitable to be used with other product categories. Thus, it has been recommended for future study to refine other product categories to gain more varieties in green products pattern behavior and to enhance the green marketing. It is also recommended for future studies to increase the sample size since the sample size used in this study was N=200. Thus, the data will be less in biased and error. Since this study is only limited to Generation X respondents, it is recommended for future studies to focus on Generation Y and Baby Boomers where it could also be relevant.

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