

Factors Influencing Malaysian Universities Students' Biodegradable Products Purchasing Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Drastic increase in global economies is the reason for the growing trend of global consumerism, which has resulted in the use of natural resources, leading to severe degradation of the environment. This research examines factors influencing universities students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour. Biodegradable products are becoming a more attractive topic, especially under the environmental act in the market nowadays. However, there are still a few researches had been done on the consumer's perspective or behaviour towards these products among universities students. The study only employed one method, which is survey research made with google forms. The questionnaire link was distributed through online platforms, and 328 samples had been collected. This paper shows a significant positive relationship between Malaysian universities students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour with three factors which are social influence (SI), environmental concern (EC) and perceived environmental responsibility (ER). However, government initiative (GI) has no significant effect on the universities students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour. The analysis of the factors influencing biodegradable products purchasing behaviour will mainly base on the samples of Malaysian universities students only. Hence, the gathered information depended solely on a small percentage of consumers in Malaysia. Through this research, the findings will contribute to the increasing awareness of the existence and benefits of biodegradable products among the students. In the manufacturer perspective, this research will assist them in creating more effective marketing strategies for biodegradable products with a better understanding of students' trends, demands and behaviours.

Keywords

purchasing behaviour, social influence, environmental concern, perceived environmental responsibility, government initiative

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Introduction

One of the main reasons companies have for making their goods and services environmentally friendly is consumers' desire to pay for biodegradable products. In elaborating the explanations for the limited popularity of biodegradable goods on the retail market, Ha and Janda (2012) indicated that the contradictions between the views of customers on environmental issues, their ability to pay and their real consumption behaviour are responsible for the uneven buying pattern of biodegradable items. The value of acknowledging market views of environmental issues and their ability to compensate for the purchase of biodegradable goods is therefore stressed. In the local context, the issue that Ha and Janda (2012) addressed can be interpreted as a lack of attention to low-income groups that tend to represent the mass market in Selangor. Consumers may ignore environmentally friendly goods, possibly due to their socioeconomic characteristics or particular problems. This suggests that understanding consumer attitudes and desires towards the adoption of environmentally friendly goods is crucial and opportune in these rapidly emerging economies. A non-biodegradable material can be described as commodities made from a commodity form that can not be infringed by natural species and functions as a pollution source. According to recent UNEP (UN Environment Programme) reports, the use of non-degradable content by consumers is one of the key contributors to water and land pollution currently occurring globally. As a result, programs and policies have grown to raise public awareness and educate consumers about the importance of converting to

biodegradable content from conventional. (United Nations Unies (2015)

On the other hand, previous researchers like Chan and Lau, 2000; Soonthonmai, 2001; Tanner and Kast, 2003; Kamal & Vinnie, 2007; Lee, 2008; Cheah, 2009 did few studies on green buying behaviours. Unlike universities students, most studies focus on general consumers. Researcher in this study decided to focus on universities students because of high purchasing power in all purchasing activities caused them to have the final decision. Malaysian universities recently launched campaign to ban environmentally unfriendly goods. This event offers researchers a valuable opportunity to identify the first factors that influence consumers' attitudes toward green goods. Second, the lack of knowledge prompts researchers to conduct this study in order to fill this knowledge gap in understanding students' behaviour towards buying green products by Malaysian universities' students.

The research objectives of this study are to investigate the factors influencing the selling of biodegradable products for development, to examine the impact of the social influence on the purchasing behaviour of biodegradable products of students, to study the effect of environmental issues on the purchasing behaviour of biodegradable products of students, to investigate the effect of perceived environmental responsibilities

Biodegradable jobs for consumers have an impact on society's purchasing power. Since the biodegradable product in our culture is not normal, this work will indirectly help students become conscious of the product. With this study, students will be exposed to the benefits of biodegradable

material, which will ultimately enhance understanding between themselves. Other than that, before buying something and buying the best one, this work allows students to choose where to match the current product on the market first with the biodegradable product.

Literature Review

Consumer buying behaviour can be characterised as the behaviour exhibited by consumers in the quest, buy, utilise, evaluation and recycling of goods, services as well as ideas that suited to their needs, wishes and expectations (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997). It is, therefore, a study of the decisions made by individuals on how to spend their available resources.

Biodegradable products are also known as green products. The use of plastic has become a significant problem due to the extremely long decomposition time for the plastic, which leads to massive issues such as landfill waste and wildlife hazards. Therefore, to counter this problem of plastic use, it is essential to reliably change the people on plastic to biodegradable products to reduce waste.

Motivation-Need Theory

Abraham Maslow (1965) has theorised that needs could be structured hierarchically and lowest hierarchical needs must be met first before the higher need is met. According to Maslow, psychological needs come first, followed by security needs, social needs, self-esteem and finally self-actualisation needs. The pyramid is thought to be structured in such a way that the satisfaction of the lower-need will lead to the activation of the higher-need above it. Therefore, this theory is crucial in this research as it proves how needs for biodegradable products can be created among consumers. Marketers use this theory as customer profiler, which allows them to determine effectively which group of individuals may be great prospects and which information they will need to listen. When consumers want to feel connected with their social circle and gain respect from them, purchasing behaviour for biodegradable products among consumers can be created as they are trying to satisfy their need for love and belonging or even self-esteem.

Theory of Reasoned Action

In order to explain how a customer contributes to different purchasing behaviour, the theory of reasoned action was created by Fishbein (1980). According to Ha (1998), the two antecedents of performed behaviour are the attitude towards buying and subjective norm. Thus, the Theory of Reasoned Action model is applied to analyse consumer behaviour on environmental problems will influence their environmental-friendly purchasing behaviour and actions (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). This research coincides with this theory in discovering ways in which customers can create a positive image of purchasing biodegradable products for them to perform the purchasing behaviour.

Theory of Planned Behaviour

This theory was proposed by Ajzen (1991) as an addition to the Theory of Reasoned Action, where this theory explains that one's behavioural intentions determine the actions of an individual and are influenced by the behavioural attitude and subjective norms. Behavioural intentions are factors in the willingness of people to conduct a behaviour, and it is a better predictor of response. This theory is used to analyse the consumer attitude towards biodegradable goods. This work aims to explain the various determinations of green purchasing behaviour in order to gain more insight into green purchase behaviour and serve as a guide for businesses to develop and implement their eco-friendly and sustainable marketing methods efficiently and consistently.

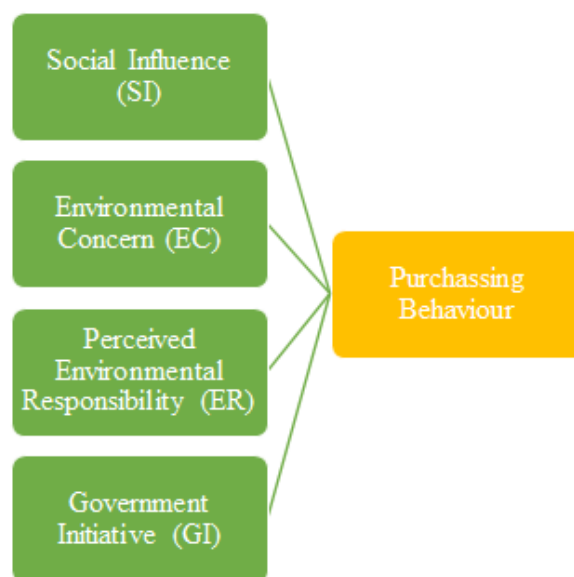


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Model

Social Influence (SI)

According to Baker et al. (2008), the research found that social influence has a clear link with green goods, as it has motivated students to purchase biodegradable products substantially. Peer influence has become one of the social factors that can affect students' buying behaviour toward green goods. According to Ryan (2001), an individual will most likely share and interact with others with the same thinking, beliefs and behaviours. For example, consumers may opt to purchase green goods because there is an effect on their peers of friends who already share the benefits of biodegradable products.

Also, Moschis and Churchill (1979) found that mass media will influence the buying behaviour of consumers towards green goods. Students will usually communicate and gather information using different forms of communication such as Facebook, Twitter, and so on. Besides, Atwater, Salwen & Anderson (1985) revealed that mass media such as magazine, newspaper, or television could be a medium that allows customers to access diverse knowledge about ecological issues.

H1: There is a positive relationship between social influence and students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour.

Environmental Concern (EC)

Dunlap and Jones (2002) described environmental concern as individuals' knowledge of and attempted to solve environmental problems. Suchard and Polonski (1991) claimed that ethical consumerism was one of the buying behaviours shared by customers who have an environmental concern. These forms of customers can purchase biodegradable goods and test food packaging materials only. According to Said (2003), health concerns are causing a strong need for environmental concern. Thus, Kim et al. (2005) indicated that students with strong environmental concerns are more likely to buy environmentally friendly goods and vice versa. Moreover, students willingness to purchase higher levels of green energy showed they tend to be more conscientious and mindful of the problems in their environment as opposed to those who do not care about their environment (Bang et al., 2000).

H2: There is a positive relationship between environmental concern and students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour.

Perceived Environmental Responsibility (ER)

According to Sukhdial and Venice (1990), the perceived environmental responsibility refers to the extent to which the individual perceives self-employment in environmental protection. In other words, perceived ecological responsibility was the degree of concern of an individual about the social and environmental obligation to save the earth from continued destruction through the use of non-ecologically sustainable goods. Citizens hope and believe that the government has the power to eradicate environmental problems. Therefore, even many people have an ecological interest, but they think that the Government or large corporations have an obligation to protect the environment rather than themselves.

Building green buying behaviour among individuals cannot be deprived of their own perceived obligation. The duty to protect the environment lies with everybody, which includes highly companies manufacturing biodegradable products.

H3: There is a positive relationship between perceived environmental responsibility and students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour.

Government Initiative (GI)

The government plays a significant role in climate change, and all efforts by the government on the initiative are undeniable. Therefore, the government must 'walk the talk' while developing and implementing strategies for sustainable development for the nation. Governments will make more significant efforts to encourage environmentally friendly services to people to raise their awareness of environmental issues continuously. The aims of national government programs are usually to promote their community's consumption patterns of green goods. Japan's government has launched 3R programs to encourage sustainable packaging and recycling, according to the

OECD (2008). Also, the "One Tonne Less" initiative was jointly initiated by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Energy and Transport in Denmark to minimise greenhouse gas emissions by its residents.

H4: There is a positive relationship between government initiative and students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour.

Methodology

The most significant phase of the survey analysis cycle is the questionnaire design is, as it will affect reliability and validity in response rate and data collection. The design of the questionnaire must be attractive and clear so that the respondents can answer and provide the best data to the researcher. Furthermore, English was the language used solely and properly in questionnaire classification. The questionnaire had used only closed-ended, which the respondents will be given options to answer the questions. Accumulated knowledge can allow the researcher to respond or solve the current market problem. The researchers use the whole metric scale of this analysis to calculate the questionnaire. The three measurements used are nominal, interval and ratio scale.

A full collection of questionnaires consists of a cover letter or consent, demographic factors, factors influencing, biodegradable products purchasing behaviour and questionnaire closure. The layout of the questionnaire was started from a cover letter that explains the survey's intent. Lastly, methods of communication such as the researcher's name, contact number and email address were given to respondents for further clarification of their queries. The questionnaire is composed of three parts which are Section A (demographic factors), Section B (influencing factors) and Section C (purchasing behaviour of biodegradable products), which allows respondents to show their acceptance towards few statements that were given under each variable.

This research sampling strategy also has no sampling frame because the population is large, which many students are studying at Malaysian universities. There are no precise details about each individual can be collected from any resources. The university would not be able to share their students' details as it is confidential. Since the research is primarily about students purchasing behaviour towards biodegradable goods, the population or subset selected are students studying at Malaysian universities. The most suitable method to use for this research is non-probability sampling since there is no sampling frame for the population. Specifically, easy sampling is chosen because data from a wide number of students studying in different Malaysian universities situated in Shah alam is quicker and simpler to collect. Individuals who are simpler and easier to locate or reach can be easily chosen as the subject matter for this investigation.

The target for this research is 500 respondents, but the minimum expectation is 250 samples. For this study, a sample size of 250 has been chosen as it is adequate to get an overall view from different types of students. Furthermore, 500 responses are collected to overcome any error or unsatisfactory surveys that may result in insufficient and unacceptable data for this research to conclude. Finally,

in predicting the level of precision or confidence, 250 participants present an acceptable risk. Collection of data will be done one-shot or cross-sectional using Google Form where the survey link is distributed through online platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram. This method is chosen because it is convenient and faster for the respondents to answer the questionnaires at any time and anywhere. Moreover, the online platform is where the sample is gathered mainly in number and also a preferred medium for the students nowadays.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis testing

Correlation analysis

Reliability Test

Table 4.1: Reliability of Social Influence (SI)

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.795	5

There are five items used in this study to measure social influence. Based on the alpha value, it is clear that there is an acceptable level of reliability for the social influence data.

Table 4.2: Reliability of Environmental Concern (EC)

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.911	5

There are five items used in this study to measure environmental concern. Based on the alpha value, it is clear that there is an excellent level of reliability for the environmental concern data.

Table 4.3: Reliability of Perceived Environmental Responsibility (ER)

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.703	5

There are five items used in this study to measure the perceived environmental responsibility. Based on the alpha value, it is clear that there is an acceptable level of reliability for the perceived environmental responsibility data.

Table 4.4: Reliability of Government Initiative (GI)

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.721	5

There are five items used in this study to measure government initiative. Based on the alpha value, it is clear that there is an acceptable level of reliability for the government initiative data.

Table 4.5: Reliability of Biodegradable Products Purchasing Behaviour (PB)

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.807	5

There are five items used in this study to measure government initiative. Based on the alpha value, it is clear that there is a good level of reliability for the government initiative data.

Correlation Analysis

Table 4.6: Correlation Analysis

Correlations		SocialInfluence	EnvironmentalConcern	PerceivedEnvironmentalResponsibility	GovernmentInitiative	PurchasingBehaviour
SocialInfluence	Pearson Correlation	1	.403**	.434**	.304**	.573**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	328	328	328	328	328
Environmental Concern	Pearson Correlation	.403**	1	.815**	.770**	.593**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	328	328	328	328	328
Perceived EnvironmentalResponsibility	Pearson Correlation	.434**	.815**	1	.716**	.589**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	328	328	328	328	328
GovernmentInitiative	Pearson Correlation	.304**	.770**	.716**	1	.506**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	328	328	328	328	328
PurchasingBehaviour	Pearson Correlation	.573**	.593**	.589**	.506**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	328	328	328	328	328

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

First and foremost, social influence has a significant relationship with purchasing behaviour. Social influence has a positive relationship with purchasing behaviour, which both independent and dependent variables related in the same direction. When social influence increases, purchasing behaviour will also increase. 57.3% of purchasing behaviour

can be increased by social influence. On the other hand, environmental concern has a significant relationship with purchasing behaviour. Environmental concern has a positive relationship with purchasing behaviour, which both variables related in the same direction. If environmental concern increases, purchasing behaviour will also increase. 59.3% of purchasing behaviour can be increased by

environmental concern. Besides, perceived environmental responsibility has a significant relationship with purchasing behaviour. Perceived environmental responsibility has a positive relationship with purchasing behaviour, which both variables related in the same direction. When perceived environmental responsibility increases, purchasing behaviour will also increase. 58.9% of purchasing behaviour can be increased by perceived environmental responsibility. Last but not least, government initiative has a significant relationship with purchasing behaviour. Government initiative has a positive relationship with purchasing behaviour, which both independent and dependent variables related in the same direction. If government initiative increases, purchasing behaviour will also increase. 50.6% of purchasing behaviour can be increased by government initiative. Hence, it is proven that environmental concern has a higher effect or more important compared to social influence, perceived environmental responsibility and government initiative towards purchasing behaviour.

Multiple regression

Table 4.7: Model Summary of Variables

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.708 ^a	.501	.495	.52864
a. Predictors: (Constant), GI, SI, ER, EC				

Model summary table primarily explains the proportion of dependent variable variation described by the independent variable. As shown in Table 4.7, adjusted R square value is less than 0.50, which is 0.495. Based on the Adjusted R Square measure, it is evident that 49 per cent variance of students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour depends on these four independent variables. It means that 51 per cent variance of the purchasing behaviour of biodegradable products depends on other factors.

Table 4.8: ANOVA of Variables

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	90.649	4	22.662	81.093	.000 ^b
	Residual	90.266	323	.279		
	Total	180.915	327			
a. Dependent Variable: PB						
b. Predictors: (Constant), GI, SI, ER, EC						

Table 4.8, which is the ANOVA, talks about the model fit for this research. The significant value is less than 0.01%, at 99% confidence. Hence, we can conclude that our conceptual model is fit for this study.

Table 4.9: Coefficients of Variables

Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	.777	.158		4.909 .000
	SI	.366	.042	.378	8.608 .000
	EC	.168	.056	.231	3.005 .003
	ER	.153	.063	.173	2.424 .016
	GI	.077	.055	.089	1.404 .161
a. Dependent Variable: PB					

The significant value in table 4.9 shows whether the independent variables are significant or not towards the dependent variable. If the significant value is less than 0.05, then the variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable. Social influence, environmental concern and perceived environmental responsibility shows a significant effect on the biodegradable products purchasing behaviour while government initiative has a no significant effect on the dependent variable.

As for the standardised coefficient beta, it is used to measure the effect of each independent variable has on the dependent variable. 37.8 percent of biodegradable products purchasing behaviour can be enhanced by creating more social influence towards the students. Social influence is very crucial to create product or brand awareness in the market nowadays as a consumer or specifically, students always depends on other opinions. 23.1 percent of biodegradable products purchasing behaviour can be improved by raising the environmental awareness of the community about the environment and biodegradable products. Awareness is essential to spread the knowledge on how not an eco-friendly product can harm our earth. 17.3 percent of that biodegradable products buying behaviour can be increased by improving the perceived environmental responsibility of the public. Every individual should realise their responsibility to act in decreasing the hazardous effects of using plastic and non-organic products in order to buy more biodegradable products. 8.9 percent of that biodegradable products buying behaviour can be improved by increasing the reliability of Government Initiative. The government also plays a major role to counter the environmental problems by enforcing rules and regulations besides easing the process to increase the biodegradable products purchasing behaviour.

Table 4.10: Results

HYPOTHESIS	RESULT
H1: There is a positive relationship between social influence and students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour	Hypothesis accepted
H2: There is a positive relationship between environmental concern and students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour	Hypothesis accepted
H3: There is a positive relationship between perceived environmental responsibility and students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour	Hypothesis accepted
H4: There is a positive relationship between government initiative and students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour	Hypothesis rejected

Conclusions

This study makes a theoretical contribution in the field of biodegradable products and students' purchasing behaviour, specifically in Management & Science University. It also adds to the existing and previous literature about a general relationship between green products and consumers' purchasing behaviour. Based on the theories of Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behaviour adopted in this research, researchers indicated that the environmental beliefs of personal factors such as perceived environmental responsibility and environmental concern are more appropriate and accurate to demonstrate the purchasing behaviour of biodegradable products of the students than environmental factors such as governmental initiative and social influence. Potential researchers will, therefore, include an in-depth analysis of how the environmental values of personal factors will greatly explain the purchasing behaviour of biodegradable goods from students. The previous chapter of data analysis proved that the most important independent variable that gives a significant effect on the purchasing behaviour of students is social influence. Social influence is very crucial in making a decision or solving a problem in students' daily life. Hence, a significant impact from social influence is needed as a push factor for the students. The second most essential influence on the purchasing behaviour of students is an environmental concern. Marketers need to increase product or brand awareness the students will start a green consumption or use more biodegradable products in their daily life. The third most impactful independent variable is called as perceived environmental responsibility. The students should be exposed or involved more with biodegradable products to increase their knowledge of the benefits of green consumption. Lastly, the less impactful yet a still significant

factor to influence biodegradable products purchasing behaviour is the government initiative. The Malaysian government should ease the managers and marketers' effort in the process of promoting the need for purchasing biodegradable products.

The first limitation relates to time constraints, which led to the omission of several other factors from the research that might have been of interest to this study. The sample size is also one of the limitations of this research due to time constraints. Therefore, there are only 328 respondents were managed to collect. Another limitation of this study is the Movement Control Order (MCO). Face-to-face data collection method was not able to perform due to COVID-19. Therefore, data were collected by using the social media platform only. By spreading the questionnaire through online only, most of the students ignored the survey as they did not want to answer it.

Furthermore, the topic for the survey has been changed because data were only able to be collected through the social media platform. Instead of surveying factors influencing students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour in Shah Alam, the survey decided to focus only on students. Lastly, the limitation of this study is the length of the questionnaire. In this survey, a total of 34 questions were included to cover all of the aspects of the factors influencing students' biodegradable products purchasing behaviour. Some of the respondents found it too lengthy. A lengthy question has made them showed lack of interest to answer the survey.

This research concentrates only on a particular group of samples which is students of due to time constraint. The finding and outcome do not encompass the entire Malaysian user population. Resultantly, the population should be wider and include highly diverse consumers studying in different states and cities. In addition, with bigger sample size and a different list of questions among green-conscious consumers, theoretically, different findings may be leveraged against green-buying consumer behaviour. Given this situation, it would be essential to perform future studies with a broader sample over a longer term to decide whether the results varied from those of this present research.

In addition, future researchers should investigate other factors in demographic issues to verify whether or not there is a significant difference between the purchasing behaviour of demographic and biodegradable products of consumers. A few studies have shown that green consumers are usually between the age group (older generation) of 30 to 44 years (Roberts, 1996; D'Souza et al., 2007). Consequently, in the future, it is wise demonstrating whether or not there is a strong correlation between demographic trends and environmentally friendly buying behaviour.

Furthermore, the perceived environmental responsibility is the least influence leading to the biodegradable products purchasing behaviour of the students. Therefore, in the future, researchers should examine the reasons leading to perceived environmental responsibility being the least impact among these effects of four variables. Last but not least, the environmental concern is the most influence that contributes to the biodegradable products purchasing behaviour among students. Thus, in the future, researchers should analyse the reasons that cause the environmental

concern to be the most influential among these four variables are.

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