

Factor Affecting Green Awareness on Generation Y Purchasing Behavior towards Green Brand Products

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ABSTRACT

The study of green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products has become one of the major research topic. Generation Y is maturing a pragmatic generation that responsible to save the environment as well as benefit to the world economic. However, there is still a gap exist on the generation Y population in Malaysia. Thus, this study is conducted to investigate the most determinants that affect green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior toward green brand products. There are six independent variables that had been determined in this research study which are social influence, price consciousness, health consciousness, environmental concern, eco-label and roles of government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Survey questions were distributed among 400 respondents of generation Y at age ranging from 18 to 35 at Penang, Malaysia. The data was analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis and find out only health consciousness, environmental concern, eco-label and roles of government and NGOs that affect green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand product. Roles of government and NGOs became the most important determinant that affect green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products in Penang. Hence, government and NGOs should actively involve generation Y in their activities and advertised through mass media and social media of any green message or campaign in order to raise generation Y's green awareness on purchasing green brand products.

KEYWORDS: Green Awareness, Generation Y, Purchasing Behavior, Green Brand Products.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, environmental concern has become a prevalent phenomenon around the world as a consequence of the deterioration of the environment. The severities of environmental problems are caused by depleting of natural resources. According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the statistic of global temperature has been rise because of greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide trap have affected the global climate. Therefore, increasing the awareness of the severities of environmental issues has led to the number of consumer's attitude towards environmentally friendly products [41, 24]. In [19, 21], defined green brand product as a brand which offers a notable eco-advantage and comprise of a set of green attributes that minimize adverse environment impact in order to create a positive impression to consumer toward green purchasing behavior. Furthermore, Malaysia government targets half a million Malaysians for green awareness campaign with a rapid improving in the consumer awareness towards green brand products [49]. The Census provides that the population of Malaysia in 2015 is recorded 30.65 million where generation Y is dominated around 11 million or 37.1% of the total Malaysia population [11]. Thus, this statement proved that generation Y has made up the largest segment of Malaysia's population as compare with generation X and generation Z. In addition, Penang population comprises around 1.61 million of the total Malaysia population and estimated 442.1 thousands or 27.4% is dominated by generation Y in that population [10]. The previous study indicates that generation Y is a significance important to marketers as they represent the future of green consumerism in market segment. This statement is supported by [30] who stated that the statistics in 2009 revealed generation Y will represent approximately 26% to 30% of total global consumer market in which equivalent to trillions of dollar market worldwide.

The study of green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products has become one of the major current research topic in Malaysia [36]. However, there are still a gap existed on the awareness of generation Y towards purchasing green brand products in Malaysia. Nevertheless, although Asia country like Malaysia has keep up the environmentalism practice, the study involving green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products remain noticeably low. This statement can be supported by [6, 53] who state that although 40% of generation Y comprise of Malaysia population, but only 4% of them are willing to buy into the green products. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the factors that affecting green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products in order to take the initiative to fill up the gap in Malaysia and to ensure that the green awareness capable pass on to generation

Y population. This study also attempted to investigate the most determinant that affect green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Green Awareness

The green awareness began in between of the 1960s and early 1970s with increasing concern about the rapid growth in the economic, negative impact of consumer's consumption pattern, exploitation of the natural resources and population growth on the environment [12, 9]. Green awareness has been considered as one of the critical predictors of appropriate environmental behavior. Recently, green is slowly and steadily become the symbolic color of eco-awareness in Malaysia. Meanwhile, being green has turned out to be the trend among businesses, marketers or manufacturers by offering their own brand of green products or known as environmentally friendly products [17]. According to Penang Chief Minister who stated that Penang Green Council has promoted the green policies through various events and activities like Penang Green Carnival 2011, Green Penang 3A Gala, Earth Day Celebration, World Environment Day Celebration and Penang Green Expo in which aimed to raise the awareness among young generation towards natural environment [38].

Green Brand Products

In [12, 21] stated that a green brand comprised of a set of benefits and attributes that associated with minimized unfavorable environment impact in order to generate a positive impression to consumers in increasing their concern towards environmental. Green brand is also defined as a brand which offered a significant eco-advantage over the incumbents and capable to attract consumers who set precedence to be green in their purchase [12, 19] Generally, green brand products is also known as an environmentally friendly product or ecological products that incorporate the strategies of recycled content, reduced packaging or using less toxic materials to minimize the impact on the natural environment [48]. There are varieties of green brand products, ranging from organic foods, laundry detergents and household cleaning products to cosmetics and toiletries, and from energy saving appliances to biodegradable cat litter. In the previous study performed by [44, 51] found out that the green brand products' market in Malaysia is still at its infancy stage and little knowledge about the consumer purchasing behavior in Malaysia is available. In a recent study by [7] who found out that there are numbers of shops that sell green brand products which is grooming in the mall likes Queensbay Mall and Gurney Plaza in Penang.

Generation Y

Generation Y is also known as the Millennials and Echo Boomers, are the individual who born from 1980 to 1997 [26]. Generation Y cohort is characterized by the criterion of high disposable income, quality seekers, technologically advanced, social conscious, brand loyal as well as willing to pay more for brands [4, 47, 28]. In [30] stated that the statistics in 2009 revealed generation Y would represent approximately 26% to 30% of total global consumer market in which generate trillions dollar of market worldwide. It means that the larger demographic of young consumers will represent the larger force in the consumers marketplace and significant behavioral shifted on their green buying behavior. Therefore, generation Y who are adolescents were found to portray stronger perceptions concerning environmental issues which indicate that this generation is the green market to be penetrated in the future [17]

DETERMINANTS THAT AFFECT GENERATION Y PURCHASING BEHAVIOR TOWARDS GREEN BRAND PRODUCTS

Social Influence

Social influence, according to [43] is the social dynamics in which individuals associated with other people by presenting similar qualities is identified as homophile. An individual can be extremely influenced by their social surrounding such as peers, relatives, colleagues, families and business partners [20]. Previous studies conducted by [25] found that consumers like to discuss their environmentally friendly attitude with their friends and they would follow group norms in order to gain acceptance in groups. In addition, in [33] stated that family is an external factor which has a direct influence an individual in purchasing products. This is due to family is considered to be one of the most valuable sources in building individual norms and belief. Thus, family influence is able to be inspiration to generation Y in shaping their behavior towards green awareness as they are the individual closer to young people. In addition, in [15] stated that social network and product involvement are interrelated. Social media is also one of the influencer that capable to bring huge impact on young people towards purchasing green brand products. Studied done by [36] found that social influence had significant factor that explained the purchasing behavior among Gen Y in Malaysia.

Price Consciousness

Price is the most significant determinant for a consumer in the selection of generic brand [22]. Studies performed by [14] indicated that consumers are price sensitive when it comes to going green. This is because green brand products are considerably more expensive as compared to the traditional products and this high price definitely would deter the non-green consumers. Moreover, price is also an attribute that consumers reflected on when making a purchasing decision towards green brand products. Previous studies pointed out that customers are price sensitive but if they acquired full information about the green brand products, they surely would buy into the products at high price. Nevertheless, study performed by [39] found out that most of the customers would buy more organic food if they were cheaper in price. The green purchase probability towards green brand products decrease if the price premium increase [8, 14]. Besides, there were groups of environmentally conscious consumers found out that there are more than 80% of Thai, Malaysia and Korean consumers who are willing to pay premium price to purchase green brand products [46, 32, 13].

Health Consciousness

Health consciousness refers to the degree in which health concerns are integrated into an individual's daily activities. An individual holds a positive belief on health is more conscious about their health, where they try to live in healthier lifestyle such as keeping healthy diets, exercising and avoid smoking. Recently, the growing level of awareness, interest and knowledge about health and nutrition lead to increasing level of so-called health consciousness [23]. Consequently, it leads to greater willingness of consumers to adopt healthy lifestyle. Health conscious consumers are more aware and concerned about their wellness and are motivated to improve their health and quality of life. In this case, health consciousness issues are crucial to consumers towards green brand products consumption such as organic food. Health consciousness towards nutrition is also a significant determinant that affect generation Y's intention toward organic foods consumption [29].

Environmental Concern

Environmental concern was another significant factor that contributes to the purchasing behavior of Gen Y studied by [36, 45]. According to [1, 52] defined that environmental concern is refer to affective traits that can be used to represent a person's anxiety, compassion, consideration, likes or dislikes about the environment. In [35] indicated that environmental concern would be the crucial determinants for marketers as they are easily to target environmentally conscious consumers. A research conducted by [28] revealed that an environmental concern is the degree of emotional involvement in environmental issues in which has a significant relationship on young consumer purchasing behavior. Besides, in [5] stated that consumers who were more concerned on the environment expressed more willingness to pay more for green brand products such as renewable energy, energy efficiency appliances and so on than who were less concerned. It has also been pointed out consumers express their environment concern based on the product characteristics, accuracy of green product claims, information provided on the products and its benefits [16, 31]. Young individuals were the cohort who grew up in a period where environmental concern was an important issue at some level and motivate them to be sensitive towards green marketing issues.

Eco-Label

According to [36, 42], eco-labels refer to the information a product provides "something about the environmental impacts related with the production or use of a product." Recently, the eco-label is increasingly being utilized by green marketers to promote the identification of green products [14]. Eco-labeling is an effective tool which helps in bridging the gap between sellers and buyers by providing the information of green brand products. In [40] stated that the awareness of eco-label has positive effect between the green brand products knowledge and consumer's purchasing intention. Besides, prior study also stated that eco-labels of green brand products are effective instruments to attract young consumers and inform them about the effects of their purchasing decision and the environment. In [18] showed that young consumers, women and graduates hold a more positive attitude toward products that are eco-labeled. So, eco-labels can be helpful in demonstrating to consumers that environmental improvements have been built into a product [27].

Roles of Government and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)

The role played by Malaysian Government and NGOs in environmental protection is indubitable [36, 45]. This is due to Malaysian government and NGOs have made the formidable commitments to reinforce the sustainable development in Malaysia. Moreover, Malaysian government targeted to increase the recycling quota from 5% to 22% by continuing facilitate and increase the awareness about 3Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) to the public to help confront with the environmental problems. In [34] had reported that government is playing a critical role in endorsing green purchasing in Japan and increase the production and consumption of environmentally products. In 2015, 'Anugerah Hijau' or the Green Awards is organized by non-governmental organization (NGO) EcoKnights, along with its collaborative partners and sponsors have launched a contest

aims to challenge young consumers to be creative and innovative in addressing everyday environmental issues in order to increase their green awareness. Penang Green Council which is a non-governmental organization has cultivates, facilitates and coordinates environmental protection in Penang in which aspires to make Penang a cleaner, greener, safer and healthier state together [38].

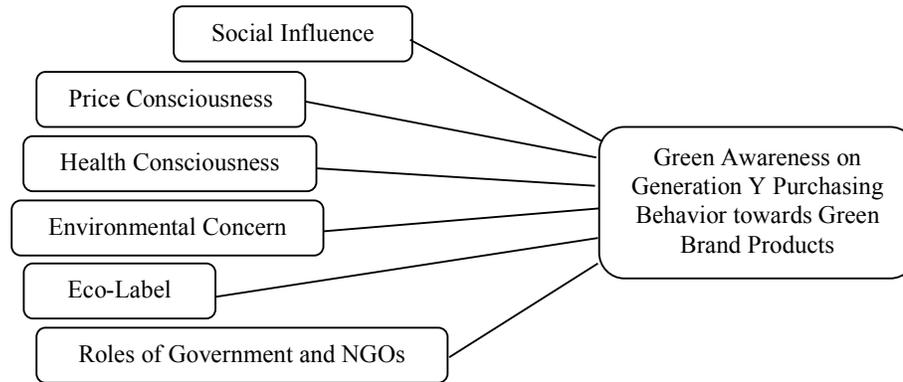


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study was adopted from the Theory of Reasoned Actions (TRA) [3] and Theory of Planned Behaviors (TPB) [2] which used to explain the generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products in Penang, Malaysia. Based on the theoretical framework, six independent variables such as social influence, price consciousness, health consciousness, environmental concern, eco-label and the roles of government and NGOs are hypothesized to affect the dependent variable which was green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products.

Hypothesis used for this study are stated as below:

- H1:** There is no significant relationship between social influence and green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products.
- H2:** There is no significant relationship between price consciousness and green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products.
- H3:** There is no significant relationship between health consciousness and green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products.
- H4:** There is no significant relationship between environmental concern and green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products.
- H5:** There is no significant relationship between eco-label and green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products.
- H6:** There is no significant relationship between role of government and NGOs and green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, the research design going to adopt by researcher is descriptive research design. Since in this study, the research problem is identified and still in trends that are developing, so the researcher attempted to choose descriptive design as the most suitable research design. Therefore, descriptive design helped to determine the determinants that affect green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products.

Quantitative research method was appropriate in this study which aimed to determine the factors that affected generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products. In other word, quantitative research examines the relationships between variables, which were measured numerically and analyzed using a range of statistical techniques. In this case, the research was conducted by using questionnaire to get the response from generation Y on their purchasing behavior towards green brand products.

Simple random sampling (sometimes known as random sampling), from probability sampling technique was an appropriate approach in this research study to collect data from the respondents. Simple random sampling was one where each individual has an equal chance of being selected for the survey and a pre-identified individuals are identifies for interviewers to contact. In other words, the sampling units are selected randomly. In this study, a total 400 sets of questionnaire were distributed randomly to individuals belonging to the age group between 18 to 35 years old who live in Penang, Malaysia. Therefore, this research was accordance the rule of thumb in determining sample size level.

Quantitative data analysis is a systematic approach to investigate in which numerical data is collected and/or the researcher transforms what is collected into numerical data. In this research, the data was being analyzed by using multiple linear regression analysis. The dependent variable in this research is green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products while the independent variables represented the determinants which were social influence, price consciousness, health consciousness, environmental concern, eco-label and roles of government and NGOs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability Test

Table 1: Reliability statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.927	36

According to the Table 1, there were total 36 items to be measured by using the result of 30 respondents in which taken from the pilot test and it showed that the alpha value was achieved 0.927. Hence, it means that all the items used for measuring these seven variables in the survey questionnaire were reasonable internal consistency and considered excellent.

Respondents Rate

This research study has distributed 400 sets of questionnaire to respondents who was live at Penang. The total number of questionnaires that were distributed is 400 (100%) as Table 2. The number of questionnaire that was obtained same as the number of quantities that fully response which was 350 or 87.5%. However, the questionnaire that unreturned consisted of 50 which was recorded 12.5%.

Table 2: Responses rate

Criteria	Total	Percent (%)
Number of questionnaire distributed	400	100
Fully response	350	87.5
Unreturned	50	12.5

Multiple Regression Analysis

In this research study, researcher was repeating test for the coefficient multiple regression analysis of each variables. The purpose of conducting repeat test variable of multiple regression analysis was to find the significant relationship between dependent Y (green awareness) and independent variable X (social influence, price consciousness, health consciousness, environmental concern, eco-label and roles of government and NGOs).

Table 3: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.846 ^a	0.715	0.711	0.3146

- a. Predictors: (Constant), roles of government and NGOs, eco-label, health consciousness, environment concern
- b. Dependent variable: Green awareness

Based on the Table 3, the value of R was 0.846 and the coefficient of determination R square is equal to 0.715 which showed that about 71.5% of the variation affected green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products by variables of health consciousness, environmental concern, eco-label and roles of government and NGOs. Besides, the rest of 28.5% of the model was explained by other determinants which were able to affect the generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products.

Table 4: Repeat test variables for the coefficients multiple regression analysis

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)			Sig.		
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3
Constant	0.487	0.466	0.534	0.002	0.002	0.000
SI	0.063	0.059		0.090	0.096	
PC	-0.017			0.714		
HC	0.132	0.131	0.145	0.001	0.001	0.000
EC	0.238	0.236	0.251	0.000	0.000	0.000
EL	0.182	0.180	0.187	0.000	0.000	0.000
RGN	0.284	0.281	0.285	0.000	0.000	0.000

Dependent variable: Green awareness

As Table 4 showed, there were three repeating test variables for the Coefficients Multiple Regression Analysis. Throughout Test 1 and 2, researcher found that there were two variables such as price consciousness and social influence has no significant relationship on green awareness on generation purchasing behavior towards green brand products. This is because the significant of both variables were greater than 0.05. Hence, researcher repeated the tests for Coefficients Multiple Regression Analysis by excluded the not significant variable until other variables are significant at 0.000. Based on Test 3 result, the multiple regression equation as follow:

$$y = 0.534 + 0.145(\text{HC}) + 0.251(\text{EC}) + 0.187(\text{EL}) + 0.285(\text{RGN}) \quad (1)$$

where y = green awareness, HC = health consciousness, EC = environmental concern, EL = eco-label and RGN = roles of government and NGOs.

Based on the equation above, regression coefficient of health consciousness was 0.145. It means that every 1 unit of x would lead to increase 0.145 on green awareness in health consciousness. Besides, every 1 unit of x would lead to increase 0.251 on green awareness in environmental concern. The regression coefficient of eco-label is 0.187. So, it means that every 1 unit of x would lead to increase 0.187 on green awareness in eco-label. Lastly, every 1 unit of x would lead to increase 0.285 on green awareness in roles of government and NGOs.

Among the six independent variables, roles of government and NGOs has the strongest influence on green awareness of generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products where unstandardized beta equal to 0.285. Thus, roles of government and NGOs was the most important predictor of green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products and followed by environmental concern was recorded 0.251, eco-label was recorded 0.187 and lastly was health consciousness which was recorded 0.145.

CONCLUSION

In this research study, the findings of multiple regression analysis have been discussed to investigate on the most determinants that would affect green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products in Penang. After repeating test for the coefficient multiple regression analysis of each variable, the result was revealed that roles of government and NGOs were scored the highest regression coefficient among the other three variables. Therefore, it could be concluded that the roles of government and NGOs was the most important factor which affects green awareness on generation Y purchasing behavior towards green brand products in Penang.

The result was consistent with previous studies by [36, 37, 48], which proposed that government's strategic decision were influenced generation Y towards green purchasing behavior. Meanwhile, these researchers revealed the same result with [45, 50], who indicated that Malaysian's Government and NGOs play a critical role as strong predictor towards green purchasing behavior. Government should initiate and promote more events on green brand product such as "go green" and "earth hour" to the community. Other than that, government also plays a critical role in organizing some green related campaign like "No Plastics Bag" and "Recycle Days" to motivate the generation Y to participate in order to increase their awareness towards green brand products. The result was also in the lines of earlier literature antecedents of green purchasing behavior [45] that found that Malaysian government should involve in motivating green purchasing behavior among young consumers. Government and NGOs play a critical role in educating generation Y the ways to protect Mother Earth by providing them the effective or positive green message like love recycle and reduce carbon footprint. In addition, Penang Green Council which was a non-governmental organization has launched a contest aims to challenge young consumers to be creative and innovative in addressing everyday environmental issues in order to increase their awareness. Therefore, government and NGOs could advertised any green message or any green campaign through mass media like television, Facebook, newspaper and so forth in order to raise generation Y's perception on green purchasing behavior.

Researcher proposes that marketers can come up with the marketing efforts and create a feel of engagement among generation Y to increase their awareness on environmental issues as well as their purchasing behavior towards green brand products. As generation Y is seemed to become more influence cohort in Malaysia, so, marketers should motivate them by involving in any valuable activities like green campaign. On the other hand, eco-label is known as indispensable marketing tool to help young consumers in identifying green brand products in marketplace. Hence, researcher recommends that young consumers must look for the eco-label to enhance their knowledge when make decision to purchase green brand products. Lastly, researcher suggests that increasing environmental education and knowledge is crucial to generation Y. This is because of educating generation Y about the environmental issues is not only to facilitate sustainable environment, but at the same time also convey them about the green message such as reduce carbon footprint, love recycle and so on as well as to create a healthier lifestyle. In addition, government and NGOs also play a critical role in educating generation Y about the knowledge of green environment. Therefore, researcher suggests that government and

NGOs shall launch a contest on green campaign to increase the awareness on young consumer towards green purchasing behavior.

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