

# Factors Affecting the Willingness to Purchase Green Products among University Undergraduates

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## Abstract

The protection and conservation of human ecology or green products have a significant impact on the current and future living standards of Malaysian generations, forming a reciprocal system in the environment surrounding human beings; hence, all individuals, especially students must recognize the need for introducing green products in light of environmental poverty. In the present study, the influential attitude and behaviour of university undergraduates towards their willingness to purchase green products were examined quantitatively using questionnaires to achieve the research objectives. Prior to the distribution of questionnaires, a pilot study was conducted to analyse the instrument's reliability and validity. Evidently, other than the collectivism value, university undergraduates' willingness to purchase green products is also influenced by price and attitude. In determining how the ecological environment can be maintained, the study found that university undergraduates are more interested in normal products than green products and this proves that price and attitude may hinder green purchase among university undergraduates.

**Keywords:** Green Products, Purchase, Willingness, Attitude, Students

## INTRODUCTION

The worldwide use of goods and services has increased rapidly, depleting natural resources and causing serious environmental harm (Chen & Chai, 2010; Smith & Paladino, 2010; Nik Hashim et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2021) that further ignites the concept of sustainable development in the wake of environmental awareness and concerns in the community including serious global attention to environmental issues, thereby fostering sustainable development and strategies to diminish environmental impacts. As described by Chen and Chai (2010), green products (environmentally friendly or ecological products) comprise contents that are recycled to protect the environment. The purchasing of green products is defined by green purchasing and selling actions in which individuals profit from green products with diminished environmental effects by having healthier, enhanced living standards. As defined by previous scholar, green purchasing intention refers to the willingness of a consumer to purchase green items as well as their motivation to do so (Hao, Liu, Chen, Sha, Ji, & Fan, 2019; Hashim et al., 2019; Ramayah, Lee & Mohamad, 2010).

This study analyses the influential factors towards university undergraduates' willingness to purchase green products to better understand how the innovation of green products influences company performance in the competitive market. Other than the finding that consumer willingness to further purchase green products is somehow influenced by gender, the major roadblocks to sustainable economic development also include average green products, the rapid expansion of the world market, and resource and environmental challenges. However, 60% of consumers have the willingness to pay for premium green products and, in fact, green consumers are less concerned about the price of green products than non-green consumers (Roos & Nyrud, 2008; Terlau & Hirsch,

2015; Kardoyo, Feriady, Farliana, & Nurkhin, 2020). Given the premium price of green products, non-green consumers tend to only opt for regular products; hence, Suki (2013) asserted that the price of green products should not be too expensive so that these consumers can turn into green consumers and green companies can further gain additional profits. Other than highlighting green products, marketers can also create green product awareness among consumers by exploring their attitude towards green products (Kumar & Ghodeswar, 2015; Martinho, Pires, Portela, & Fonseca, 2015) so that these consumers are willing to pay a premium for green products and services that subsequently influence their behaviour (Chen & Chai, 2010; Qalati et al., 2020; Omar et al., 2020; Zanuuddin et al., 2020).

Global warming is a major worldwide concern, which affects the normal temperature of countries impacted by the global warming issue. Approximately 90% of consumers in Malaysia are concerned about the environment and, in fact, non-environmentally harmful products are purchased by two-thirds of consumers around the world. However, as reported by Sheehan and Atkinson (2012), 76% of regular consumers are willing to pay a premium for green products to ensure quality that benefits green consumers and Mother Earth. Besides non-toxic, green products are also not associated with animal testing and environmental pollution. According to Mishra and Sharma (2010), green products incorporate not only natural ingredients but also approved chemicals and recycled content and they are usually packaged to a minimal degree (Jayanthiladevi et al., 2020). Following the environmental issues and ways to accomplish the ecologically sustainable quality of life, this study examines the influential factors towards the willingness to purchase green products among university undergraduates; thus, green products are the area of focus in this.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Green Products

As characterised by Jacquelin and Ottman (1992), green products incorporate recycling strategies and reduced packaging with the use of recycled content and fewer toxic substances to reduce environmental impacts. This also includes the improvement of green products that takes resources, energy, waste, and pollution into consideration. Besides, to reduce air pollution and conserve power, product functions that include production, materials, sales, and waste treatment for recycling are employed to demonstrate environmentally friendly attributes. Purchasing results are set forth in green support companies by purchasing and spending more on green products (Nguyen et al., 2021; Albayrak, Aksoy, & Caber, 2013; Linton, 2010). Acknowledging environmental obligations and searching for information with the self-interest and desire to conserve resources and diminish environmental impacts are all intrinsic aspects that green consumers have in common. According to Rahbar and Abdul Wahid (2011), green products have a major trend in businesses on a global scale; however, this trend is still new in Malaysia. Nonetheless, the increased purchase intensity and willingness among Asian clients today have driven Asian countries to shift their market focus to universal marketers (Noor, Mat, Mat, Jamaluddin, Salleh, & Muhammad, 2012; Hashim et al., 2020).

### Attitude

As indicated by Roberts (1997), the human attitude has a significant role in influencing the intentions and behaviours towards purchasing green products. Besides examining the attitude towards environmental issues and its influence on green purchase intention, the present study also examines the influence of attitude on the willingness to purchase green products among university undergraduates. Since consumer attitudes are influenced by consumer mindsets (Ireland, 1993; Herbes, Beuthner, & Ramme, 2018), mindsets were also found to have a positive relationship with behaviour through the development of distinct social orders (Mostafa, 2007). Attitude plays a significant role in recognising a certain behaviour; thus, the assumption is that one's mindset may influence the purchase and acquisition of green products (Sengan et al., 2021; Marican et al., 2021). While the

purchase of green products refers to purchasing items that are deemed environmentally friendly by consumers (Aziz et al., 2019; Mainieri, Barnett, Valdero, Unipan, & Oskamp, 1997), the purchase of green products can also be linked to an environmentally friendly behaviour where consumers have less environmental concerns (Chan, 2001; Nguyen et al., 2021). In this regard, consumers opt for green products to reduce negative environmental impacts by preserving natural resources, reducing product abuse, and nurturing wealth and safety. Besides, according to Straughan and Roberts (1999), it is important to first understand the complex consumer mindset and behaviour to address the profile of consumers with environmental awareness.

### Price

Blend and Van Ravenswaay (1999) eloquently stated that, when it comes to green product production, customers think of value as quality; therefore, Chen and Chai (2010) asserted that consumers remain to purchase green products even though they must pay a premium for these products. In fact, as evidenced by Dunlap and Scarce (1991) and Lung (2010), some consumer groups with environmental awareness are willing to spend more on green products and these groups are more prominent in the rising green markets than 80% of the consumers in Malaysia, Thailand, and Korea. Since all green products must be naturally preserved with no alterations to the basic with a premium value made externally (D'Souza et al., 2006; Martinho, Pires, Portela, & Fonseca, 2015), the price of green products is likely to stifle green purchasing behaviour by lowering the desire to understand the values and attitudes towards green purchasing (Young, Hwang, McDonald, and Oates, 2009). However, environmentally aware consumers are less concerned about the price of green products (D'Souza, Taghian, Lamb, & Peretiak, 2007; Hashim et al., 2020). Even though price was found to moderate the relationship between consumer attitude and purchasing behaviour (Young et al., 2009; Anuar et al., 2020), most environmentally aware consumers are willing to pay a premium for green products compared to consumers who are less concerned and unwilling to purchase green products (Vlosky et al., 1999; Kardoyo, Feriady, Farliana, & Nurkhin, 2020). This implies that the willingness of consumers tends to be influenced by price in relation to attitude and behaviour (Oliver & Lee, 2011).

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To achieve the objectives addressed in this study, the researcher constructed a conceptual framework to examine the influence of price and attitude as the independent variables on the willingness to purchase green products among university undergraduates. Figure 1 demonstrates the conceptual framework.

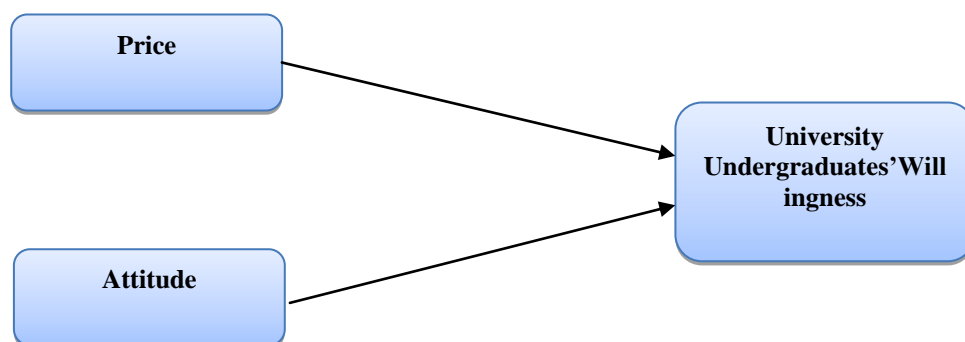


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

## METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach is a systematic study of physical processes through the collection of quantifiable data with statistical or mathematical analysis. Although university undergraduates who are willing to opt for green purchasing are prioritised in this study, the researchers also examined undergraduates who had previously made green purchases to compare the differences in the pool of university undergraduates. Therefore, this study employed a quantitative method including a probability sampling technique, particularly a simple random sampling technique to randomly select the samples and ensure that individuals in the population are fairly included (Suresh, 2011). Meanwhile, the research instrument includes a set of questionnaires comprising 21 items in several sections to measure the multi-dimensional setting in relation to green products. Specifically, Section A comprises items on the respondents' demographic background, while Section B comprises items on attitude, Section C comprises items on price, and Section D comprises items on the willingness to purchase green products. The population of the university undergraduates was selected from public universities in Kelantan and Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for the determination of sample size was used to ensure that the samples were valid and reliable (see Table 1). After distributing a total of 382 questionnaires to the respondents, the data were collected and analysed using IBM SPSS version 26 software. To analyse the statistical data and determine the consistency of the instruments that measure the constructs, a descriptive analysis was conducted including a reliability test based on Pearson's correlation coefficient that indicates the strength of a direct relationship involving two or more constructs (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006).

**Table 1: Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Sample Size**

| N  | S  | N   | S   | N   | S   | N    | S   | N      | S   |
|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|
| 10 | 10 | 100 | 80  | 280 | 162 | 800  | 260 | 2800   | 338 |
| 15 | 14 | 110 | 86  | 290 | 165 | 850  | 265 | 3000   | 341 |
| 20 | 19 | 120 | 92  | 300 | 169 | 900  | 269 | 3500   | 346 |
| 25 | 24 | 130 | 97  | 320 | 175 | 950  | 274 | 4000   | 351 |
| 30 | 28 | 140 | 103 | 340 | 181 | 1000 | 278 | 4500   | 354 |
| 35 | 32 | 150 | 108 | 360 | 186 | 1100 | 285 | 5000   | 357 |
| 40 | 36 | 160 | 113 | 380 | 191 | 1200 | 291 | 6000   | 361 |
| 45 | 40 | 170 | 118 | 400 | 196 | 1300 | 297 | 7000   | 364 |
| 50 | 44 | 180 | 123 | 420 | 201 | 1400 | 302 | 8000   | 367 |
| 55 | 48 | 190 | 127 | 440 | 205 | 1500 | 306 | 9000   | 368 |
| 60 | 52 | 200 | 132 | 460 | 210 | 1600 | 310 | 10000  | 370 |
| 65 | 56 | 210 | 136 | 480 | 214 | 1700 | 313 | 15000  | 375 |
| 70 | 59 | 220 | 140 | 500 | 217 | 1800 | 317 | 20000  | 377 |
| 75 | 63 | 230 | 144 | 550 | 226 | 1900 | 320 | 30000  | 379 |
| 80 | 66 | 240 | 148 | 600 | 234 | 2000 | 322 | 40000  | 380 |
| 85 | 70 | 250 | 152 | 650 | 242 | 2200 | 327 | 50000  | 381 |
| 90 | 73 | 260 | 155 | 700 | 248 | 2400 | 331 | 75000  | 382 |
| 95 | 76 | 270 | 159 | 750 | 254 | 2600 | 335 | 100000 | 384 |

Source: Krejcie & Morgan (1970)

## FINDINGS

### Demographic Profile

Table 2 shows the respondents' demographic background in determining the establishment of the respondent selection criteria in this study. Based on the findings, 31.41% of the respondents are females and 68.69% of them are males. The

respondents are mostly between 21-25 years old with 38.74%, whereas the lowest age group is 31-35 years old with 8.64%. Additionally, the majority of the respondents are Malay with 66.23%, followed by Sabahan locals with 11.78%, whereas the lowest race group is Others with only 0.52%. In terms of income sources, most of the respondents are PTPTN/Loanborrowers with 75.13%, whereas only 9.16% of them are scholarship holders. Finally, the majority of the respondents in this study are in their third year with 49.74%, whereas only 8.38% of them are fourth-year students.

**Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents**

| Variable             | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>GENDER</b>        |           |                |
| Male                 | 262       | 68.59          |
| Female               | 120       | 31.41          |
| <b>AGE</b>           |           |                |
| 16-20                | 56        | 14.66          |
| 21-25                | 148       | 38.74          |
| 26-30                | 145       | 37.96          |
| 31-35                | 33        | 8.64           |
| <b>RACE</b>          |           |                |
| Malay                | 253       | 66.23          |
| Indian               | 22        | 5.76           |
| Chinese              | 40        | 10.47          |
| Sabahan Local        | 45        | 11.78          |
| Sarawakian Local     | 20        | 5.24           |
| Others               | 2         | 0.52           |
| <b>INCOME SOURCE</b> |           |                |
| Parents              | 60        | 15.71          |
| PTPTN/Loan           | 287       | 75.13          |
| Scholarship          | 35        | 9.16           |
| <b>YEARS</b>         |           |                |
| First                | 70        | 18.32          |
| Second               | 90        | 23.56          |
| Third                | 190       | 49.74          |
| Fourth               | 32        | 8.38           |

### Descriptive Statistics

The findings revealed that attitude significantly influences the willingness to purchase green products among university undergraduates in Kelantan (mean = 4.160), while price significantly influences the university undergraduates' willingness to purchase green products besides helping them differentiate between green products and regular products (mean = 4.053). Furthermore, while female undergraduates are more inclined towards purchasing green products than male undergraduates, most of the undergraduates between 25 and 27 years old are disinclined towards green purchasing and this might be due to their lack of beliefs and attitudes towards green products. Although a positive green attitude may increase as the willingness of consumers increases, those at the undergraduate level were found to have more interest and willingness to purchase green products.

**Table 3: Mean Value of Independent Variables**

|          | N   | Mean  | Standard Deviation |
|----------|-----|-------|--------------------|
| Attitude | 382 | 4.160 | 2.94607            |
| Price    | 382 | 4.053 | 3.734561           |

**Reliability Test**

To measure the reliability of the variables of attitude, price, and the willingness to purchase green products, the researcher conducted a reliability test based on Cronbach's alpha value, which is considered satisfactory if the value ranges from 0.872 to 0.915 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006).

**Table 4: Reliability Test**

| Variable      | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Attitude      | 5               | 0.915            |
| Price         | 6               | 0.872            |
| Green product | 5               | 0.889            |

**Correlation Analysis**

Pearson's correlation analysis was further conducted in the present study to measure and compare the characteristics and correlation values between two different hypotheses as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Correlation Analysis**

| Variable      | 1     | 2     | 3 |
|---------------|-------|-------|---|
| Attitude      | 1     |       |   |
| Price         | 0.694 | 1     |   |
| Green product | 0.626 | 0.575 | 1 |

\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2tailed)

**Hypotheses Testing**

The one-sample T-test is a statistical method that analyses the mean score of distribution based on the statistical difference in the mean of the samples drawn from the notable or hypothesised mean of a population. Briefly, this method is a parametric analysis that analyses the research hypotheses in determining the normality of the distribution within samples. In the present study, the researcher employed T-test and correlation analyses to test the research hypotheses and based on the anticipated findings, attitude and price indeed have a significant influence on the willingness to purchase green products among university undergraduates. Since the mean score for price is more than 3, price is, therefore, deemed an influential factor by most of the respondents. Besides, all of the variables also recorded a p-value of less than 0.05, thereby indicating a high significance value.

**DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study will assist and enlighten students regarding the environment and green products by which their positive attitude towards green products may enhance their willingness to purchase green products. Hence, awareness of environmentally friendly product usage among consumers is especially important. The government department

such as the Ministry of Health should also play its role by organising campaigns to promote green product usage to enlighten the community. Based on the research findings, attitude was found to have a significant influence on the willingness to purchase green products among university undergraduates. In line with the environmental concerns and consumers' willingness to purchase green products, consumers are more enlightened about the environment and, as such, they tend to display a positive attitude towards green products and are more willing to purchase these products. Since consumers are also encouraged to encompass the behaviour of purchasing green products, the Ministry of Health should especially come up with appropriate, beneficial campaigns for the community to enlighten their existing environmental knowledge with the latest green product-related information.

Future researchers can expand the present study by administering the questionnaires using dual languages so that the respondents can understand the questions and answer them at ease. The scope of this study can also be expanded by selecting a population of youths rather than university undergraduates in particular. Besides, future studies can further employ qualitative methods, for instance, interviews and group discussions with different groups of green consumers to understand their rationale for purchasing green products. Finally, an extensive study can also be conducted in the future by comparing the types of green products with particular groups of green consumers based on their perspectives.

### CONCLUSION

Overall, price and attitude were evidenced to have a significant influence on university undergraduates' willingness to purchase green products. Green product sales are currently at an all-time high as consumers have more environmental concern towards living a healthy lifestyle; hence, it is important to avoid health and environmental issues by prioritising health and the environment through green products. In fact, on 21 October 2004, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) reported that environmental issues are directly or indirectly associated with the industrial production trends as well as consumers' behavioural and consumption trends. As such, according to Ramblogan (1997), issues such as global warming, ozone layer depletion, acid rain, including sea, river, and light pollution are a catastrophic result of environmental degradation. In sum, the influential factors of attitude and price in the present study have a strong link to the willingness to purchase green products among university undergraduates. The findings also revealed a strong link between attitude and the willingness to purchase green products as the undergraduates become more concerned about their health. Furthermore, university undergraduates who intend to opt for green products for everyday use are also willing to pay a premium for such products.

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