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## **Exploring Relationship between Individual Product Decision towards Customer Purchase Intention in Buying Eco-Green Product**

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### **Abstract**

Over the past few years, there have been an increasing number of demands on eco-green products since the awareness campaign on environmental protection. This study aims to explore the individual product decision related to customer purchase intention in buying eco-green product. This study was conducted by using quantitative method through the distribution of questionnaire for data collection. The respondents were 118 customers who visited a local shopping mall. The data were tested and analyzed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) Structural Equation Modelling. Based on the findings, three out of five factors which are product attribute, product packaging, and product support services found are to have significant relationship with the dependant variable. The marketers of green products can therefore understand the factors that may influence customer purchase intention in buying eco-green product.

**Keywords:** Individual product decision, purchase intention, eco-green product

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### **Introduction**

Recently, eco-green product is one of the most products that customers seek for. Environmental protection is considered as a global concern from which numerous attributes may influence customer's intention in buying eco-green products (Agyemen, 2014). According to Joshi and Rahman (2015), consumers possess the capability to prevent or decrease environmental damage by purchasing green products. Previous research indicates that customers have a positive attitude towards environmental protection. Many business companies have realized the advantage of new trend of green marketing sustainability which is the "effort made by business organizations to design and promote products that are eco-friendly (Choudhary & Gokarn, 2013). However, according to Hughner, McDonagh, Prothero, Shultz and Stanton (2007), even though many consumers showed a positive attitude towards purchases of organic food products with the percentage of 67%, only 4% actually purchased those products. Some common green practices include recycling, purchasing organic food, using less paper, saving electricity, avoiding aerosols and plastic bags (Gilg, Barr & Ford, 2005).

Ideally, the usage of green products is not just to save and protect the environment, but green products also guarantee the security of the future in both the fate of families, health and safety of children. Therefore, it is important to disseminate the benefits of green product by educating the consumer on green knowledge known as eco literacy. Eco literacy is categorized into two forms of consumers understanding about the impact of the product to the environment and the consumer knowledge of the product itself and how is it being produced as environmental friendly product

(D'Souza, Taghian, & Lamb, 2006). Nowadays, the issues of pollution become critical. Hence, as an initiative to solve the issue, most businesses strive to promote green products to consumer. However, promoting the green products is challenging particularly to change the intention to purchase among consumers. Some consumers are aware of the benefits of the green product; nevertheless they have less intention to purchase them. In business, the roles of product attribute, branding, packaging, labelling and support services should be considered to promote the use of green product. Thus, this study aims to investigate the roles of product attribute, branding, packaging, labelling and support services towards consumer intention to purchase the green product.

## Literature Review

### Product Attribute

Product attributes refer to characteristics of a raw material or finished goods which make them distinct from other products (Cowburn & Stockley, 2005). Attributes include size, colour, functionality, components and features that affect the product's appeal or acceptance in the market. Wee, Ariff, Zakuan, Tajudin, Ismail, and Ishak (2014) revealed that consumers rely on different product attributes during their decision-making process before deciding to purchase green products. According to Bukhari, Rana, and Bhatti (2017), green brand has some perceived attributes and benefits that give it advantage of green image that may influence the preferences of customers. It points out that the characteristics of the product have an influence on the buying process.

Kataria, Kataria and Garg (2013) discovered that there are two reasons for the purchase and consumption of eco-green products which are awareness for health and product attributes such as no harm and customers are more interested in product attributes compared to environmental concern. Consumer's decision-making also involves various benefits such as personal cost benefits (e.g. convenience, search/effort, time, energy) (Ginsberg & Bloom, 2004; Zeithaml, 1988), product benefits (e.g. price, style, fit, fabric, construction, quality, availability, brand name, store, etc.). Changes in green purchase behaviour must be investigated in the context of product attributes such as price. Consumers are price sensitive when it comes to going green (D'Souza et al., 2006). Young, Hwang, McDonald, and Oates (2010) identified price as a barrier to green purchase behaviour by stating that it reduces the influence of green values and attitude on making purchase decisions. However consumers who are most involved with the environment are willing to pay a premium price in comparison to those who are less involved and not willing to pay more (Vlosky, Ozanne, & Fontenot, 1999). Therefore, the following hypothesis is highlighted:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a relationship between product attribute and customer purchase intentions.

### Product Branding

Branding can be defined as a type of product manufactured by a particular company under a particular name. According to Chen (2010), green brand image is the strength of the products which is passed to customers that make them concerned on the sustainability and eco-friendly. Cretu and Brodie (2007) defined brand image as the consumers' mental visuals that illustrate a specific brand which is related to the products produced by a company. Ko (2013) stated that green marketing positively influences a positive brand image towards green products which represents customers' intention to choose green brand product.

Brand image has positive outcome which influences customers to choose green brand as their choice (Mourad, 2012). Building a strong brand image has always been a main objective, since it provides a lot of benefits such as larger margins, greater opportunities for extension and maintaining strong position against competitors (Delgado & Munuera, 2005). Ali and Ahmad (2016) stated that environmental concerns are not the only reasons why customers buy environmentally friendly products but the brand of the products are still the most important ones that are considered by consumers while making purchasing decision. Furthermore, Mohd Suki (2016) found that brand is the most important determinant of the intention to buy a green product. However, the result of the

study revealed that green brand knowledge does not moderate the relationship between green brand positioning and purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is highlighted:

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a relationship between product branding and customer purchase intentions.

### **Product Packaging**

People who are concerned with environmental issues are known as green consumers who always think about it and also think that they have responsibility in taking care of the environment (Soonthonsmai, 2007). They will purchase the products which bring less impact to the environment consistently. These consumers may focus on a brand of a product which has eco-friendly packaging, corporation that practices fair trade or environmental practices such as The Body Shop and Starbucks, or buying organic products. According to Agyeman (2014), green product packaging positively influences consumers' choice which can persuade consumers to purchase the product. Dantas, Minim, Deliza and Puschman (2004) stated that packaging can influence consumers' mind only in few seconds to attract their attention. Vazifehdoust, Taleghani, Esmaeilpour, and Nazari, (2013) stated that packaging of the green product may influence consumer's attitude in purchasing green product. Therefore, the following hypothesis is highlighted:

**Hypothesis 3:** There is a relationship between product packaging and customer purchase intentions.

### **Product Labelling**

Information labelling plays an important role in reassuring consumers' sensitivity to brands with a commitment to positive ethics, and thus encouraging responsible consumption (Bartiaux, 2008; Collins & Erskine, 1997). Based on previous research done by Vazifehdoust et al. 2013, the finding shows that green product labelling has a positive effect on consumer's attitude towards green product. Eco-labelling transforms a credence attribute into a search attribute and therefore helps consumers to make successful selections based on reliable information (Grolleau & Caswell, 2006). According to Nabsiah, Elham, and Tan (2011), social influence, green product knowledge, environmental concern, specific environment knowledge, income level and environmental label are having significant impact on green purchase behaviour. According to Aguilar and Cai, (2010), older American consumers have a stronger preference for eco-labelled products, while younger individuals are more sensitive to price change.

Niinimäki and Hassi, (2011), however, argued that younger women are included in the group that is most concerned with environmental and social issues in the case of textile products. Some authors have suggested that individuals with higher levels of income have a stronger preference for products carrying an Eco-label (Aguilar & Cai, 2010). According to Azizan and Suki (2013), labelling is crucial in differentiate a product to another product. It is therefore important to raise awareness of the need for green product labelling in order to help consumers understand the benefits and goodness of green products. Customers were more likely to purchase green products when the information is adequate and the label is well established. However, Kong, Harun, Sulong, and Lily (2014) stated that the use of the eco-label may be effective if product brand awareness is low or the green product has just been launched on the market. Therefore, the following hypothesis is highlighted:

**Hypothesis 4:** There is a relationship between product labelling and customer purchase intentions.

### **Product Support Service**

Product support service refers to labour-based services for hardware or software, which can be performed by the manufacturer of the product or parties other than the vendor that created the product. Nelson (1970) explained that the information search is similar to trying on a new dress or tasting a new food. However, Darby and Karni, (1973) noticed information may not always be obtained through consuming the products because producers have more information than consumers, i.e. asymmetric information. Biswas and Roy (2016) stated that enhancing in environmental

awareness programs can foster customer willingness to pay premium price for green products. Therefore, it is crucial for the marketers to ensure they provide accurate information in promoting green product to create awareness of the customers.

In addition, Wessells, (2002) explained that it is difficult for a consumer to perform laboratory tests to detect if seafood is safe or to examine the environmental negativities of food production follow the entire production process to. Thus, labelling from a credible third party such as the government provides the public a sense of quality assurance, reducing consumers' responsibilities to search for information (Caswell & Mojduszka, 1996). Consequently, when customers received enough information about the green product, it will influence customer purchase intention to buy the product (Haque et al, 2015). Europeans think that the best way for retailers to promote green products is to give them more information about these products (Eurobarometer, 2009). Leire and Thidell (2005) further argued that consumers in general have difficulties in relating environmental problems to products; differentiating between green and conventional products and have the feeling that the information provided by environmental product is far too complex to be useful in making purchase decisions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is highlighted:

**Hypothesis 5:** There is a relationship between product support services and customer purchase intentions.

### **Research Methodology**

Respondents involved in this research were 118 customers who visit a local shopping mall. A purposive sampling technique was used in this study which the customers were asked a question whether they are aware about eco-green product. All questions were adapted from Michaelidou and Hassan (2008), Rashid (2009), Fishbein and Ajzen, (1975), Kim and Hall (2015), Khan, Liang, and Shahzad (2005). This study applied Partial Least Squares (PLS) Structural Equation Modelling to analyse the influence of product attribute, branding, packaging, labelling and support service on consumer purchase intention towards green product.

### **Results and Analysis**

The analysis of the demographic data indicates that female respondents (57.6%) were dominant compared to male (42.4%). Approximately 18.6% of the respondents were 18-25 years old, 41.5% were 26-35 years old, 27.1% were 36-45 years old and 46 years and above with 12.7%. Most of the respondents were among the adults followed by youths and old citizens. On the other hands, most of the respondents (57.6%) had income between RM1001 to RM3000, followed by 27.1% who had RM5000 income and only 15.3% had income more than RM5000. From this income analysis, the consumers were high income earners who are able to pay the highest price for green products.

#### **Convergent Validity**

Convergent validity is the degree to which multiple attempts to measure the same concept are in agreement (Lo & Ramayah, 2012). As suggested by Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998), the composite reliability and average variance extracted were used to assess convergence validity. Composite reliability values of the construct indicators show the latent constructs in the range between 0.795 and 0.948 which depict the degree to which the construct indicators show the latent construct in the range between 0.821 and 0.907, which exceeded the recommended value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 1998). The values of average variance extracted which reflects the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted were in the range of 0.535 and 0.599 which exceeded the threshold value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 1998).

Table 1: Convergent Validity

Constructs	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Product Attribute	0.868	0.570
Product Branding	0.821	0.535
Product Labelling	0.866	0.566
Product Packaging	0.881	0.599
Product Support Services	0.874	0.584
Purchase Intention	0.907	0.621

**Discriminant Validity**

The discriminant validity can be ascertained using Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criterion. Fornell and Larcker’s criterion explained that if the square root of AVE of a particular variable is greater than the correlation between a variable with other variables, then the discriminant validity is guaranteed. AVE values must be greater than the correlation values in order for the variables in this study to have acceptable discriminant validity.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Product Attribute	<b>0.755</b>					
2.Product Branding	0.689	<b>0.732</b>				
3.Product Labelling	0.627	0.612	<b>0.753</b>			
4.Product Packaging	0.610	0.537	0.616	<b>0.774</b>		
5.Product Support Services	0.566	0.528	0.638	0.544	<b>0.765</b>	
6.Purchase Intention	0.680	0.561	0.661	0.648	0.644	<b>0.788</b>

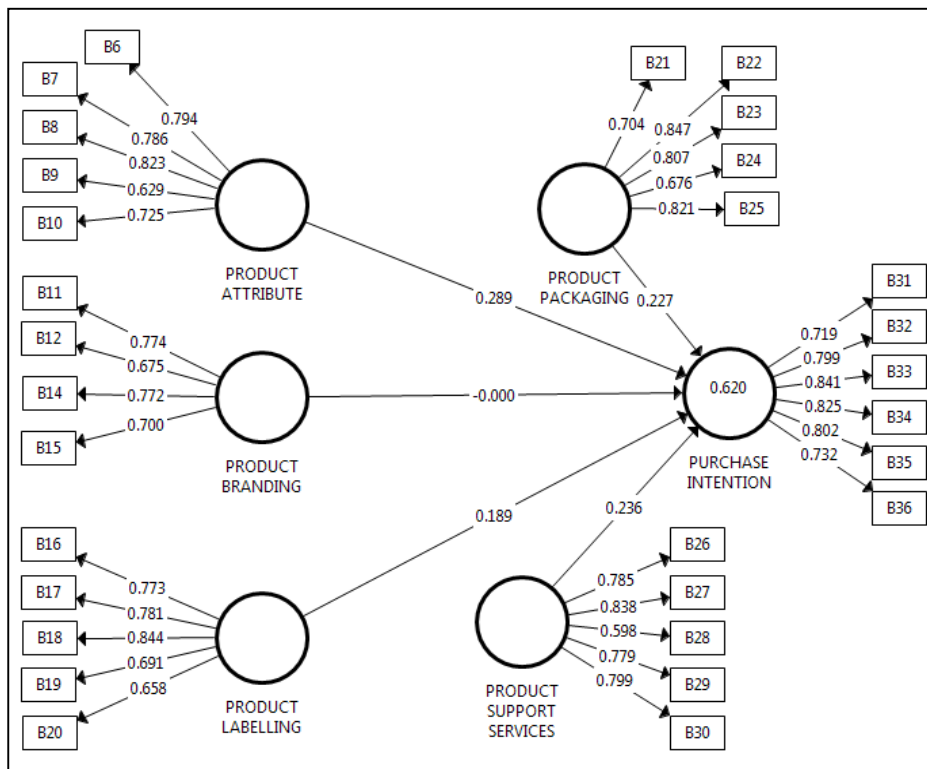


Figure 1: Measurement Model

## Structural Model

The value of R square of this model was 0.620 which indicates that 62% of purchase intention was explained by product attribute, product branding, product packaging, and product support services. Table 3 shows the results of the structural model. These show that product attribute ( $\beta=0.289$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), product packaging ( $\beta=0.227$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) product support service ( $\beta=0.227$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were positively related to purchase intention while product branding and product labelling were not significantly related to purchase intention. Thus H1, H4 and H5 were supported but H2 and H3 were not supported. The relationship had been strengthened with the values of confidence interval bias explained by no zero values between lower limit and upper limit. Moreover, according to Hair et al. (2017), the values of effect size of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 presents the effect of small, medium and large effect. Hence, the result as depicted in Table 3 shows that product attribute, product packaging and product support service had small effect towards purchase intention.

Table 3: Structural Model

Path Coefficient	Beta Value	SE	T-value	F <sup>2</sup>	LL	UL	Result
Product Attribute -> Purchase Intention	0.289	0.107	2.695	0.090	0.104	0.524	Supported
Product Branding -> Purchase Intention	0.000	0.070	0.002	0.000	-0.158	0.118	Not Supported
Product Labelling -> Purchase Intention	0.189	0.108	1.744	0.040	-0.044	0.395	Not Supported
Product Packaging -> Purchase Intention	0.227	0.078	2.903	0.071	0.060	0.364	Supported
Product Support Services -> Purchase Intention	0.236	0.119	1.980	0.078	-0.024	0.456	Supported

## Research Limitation and Future Direction

This study focuses itself only on factors of the green product. It does not examine the influence of other variables such as individual personal factors, individual personality and environmental concern that may also influence the intention of green purchasing behaviour. The identified variables also may affect individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds. Therefore, future studies may discover these aspects. It is due to awareness of the green knowledge that might be different from individual perspective. Even though if the characteristics of the green product is good, but it is still depending on the individual perception itself. Therefore, the future research may explore this dimension to identify the factors that may influence green purchasing behaviour.

## Discussion and Implications

The result of this study clearly showed determinants of product attribute, product packaging, and product support service influence consumer purchase intention toward green product. The present research revealed only product labelling and product branding were not supported as in model. As argued by Kong et al. (2014), labelling of the eco-product may be effective if product brand awareness is low and Mohd Suki (2016) found that green brand knowledge does not moderate the relationship between green brand positioning and purchase intention. There are some managerial implications of this study. It enlightens marketers about the determinants factors of customer purchase intention in buying green products. The green marketers would do well to understand these variables to green purchasing behaviour, as this will enable them to tailor their product offerings and formulate marketing strategies to influence intention green purchasing behaviour. On the other hands, the findings of this study also help organizations to acknowledge what customers take into consideration when they buy Eco-green product. Business will be aware of the strategy for improvement in fulfilling customer's expectation.

## Conclusion

As a conclusion, the roles of attributes, packaging, and product support service are important in influencing customer purchase intentions towards green product. These characteristics may help customers to have their own perception that will determine their intention to buy the products (). These results are consistent with those of Wee et al. (2014) who stated that consumers rely on different product attributes during their decision-making process in purchasing green products, and also with Vazifehdoust et al. (2013) who recognized that packaging of the green product may influence consumer's attitude in purchasing green product. The result of this study also supported by Wessells, (2002) who stated that the accurate information about the green product may influence customer purchase intention since the customer unable to perform laboratory test on their own. This study is significant to form positive customer expectation and increase customer satisfaction with the products they produce. Customer will become more aware of the existence and benefits of Eco-green products.

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