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Consumer Purchase Intention for Organic Personal Care Product

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ABSTRACT

Objective - This research aims to identify the factors that influence generation Y's purchase intentions for organic personal care products.
Methodology/Technique - There are eight variables investigated in this research that might influence the generation Y's purchase intention on organic personal care product. The eight variables include attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and 5 demographic characteristics including gender, age, income level, education level and race. The research is completed with the questionnaire used for data collection purposes. A total of 155 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, with 152 returned with completed data. The target respondent of this research is generation Y users. The data collected is keyed into Statistical Package of the Social Science (SPSS) for analysis. Among the tests incorporated in this study are reliability test, normality test, frequency test, t-test, ANOVA and Multiple Linear Regression.
Findings – The study reveals that attitude and subjective norms from the planned behavioural model have a significant relationship with consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products.
Novelty - In addition, the study also found that there is a significant difference of consumer purchase intention of organic personal care product based on gender, age, income level and education level.
Type of Paper: Empirical
JEL Classification: M30, M39.

Keywords: Purchase Intention; Organic Product; Organic Personal Care Product; Green Environment

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1. Introduction

The market for organic products within different types of industries such as food, fashion and cosmetics has expanded globally (Cervellon & Carey, 2011). This is because rising knowledge of go-green consciousness and the harm of synthetic chemicals has created the awareness among consumers, instigating them to go for organic products while adopting a healthier lifestyle (Ghazali, Soon, Mutum & Nguyen, 2017). Their increasing concern for a healthy lifestyle will create an increasing demand for organic products (Du et. al., 2017). Therefore, when the demand for organic products increases, there will be an increase in supply for organic products at the same time.

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Moreover, consumers perceive that organic products will cause less damage to the environment, applying to not only organic food, but also organic personal care products. Furthermore, organic personal care products includes skin care, hair care, oral care, cosmetic products, feminine hygiene products, deodorants and toiletries (Ghazali et. al., 2017). It consists of agricultural ingredients that are formulated without chemical and synthetic fertilizers that can protect the environment while encouraging a healthier life style (Schifferstein, & Ophuis, 1998). Personal care products have big market opportunity as organic products are belonged to the fastest growth segment in the global personal care industry. Therefore, due to the increasing concern of consumers regarding health and sustainability issues, the market opportunity for organic personal care products has grown globally (Aste, 2017). Nevertheless, the market for organic personal care products in Malaysia is still in its infancy (Fauzi & Hashim, 2015).

According to previous research, if a consumer is less aware of the use of organic products, they will not be willing to pay for higher prices (Bukhari, 2011). Since there is not much research on this topic focusing on Malaysia, this study aims to investigate purchase intentions of organic personal care products in Malaysia. Since there is a new trend and such a big market opportunity in green personal care markets, it is important to understand the reason Malaysian consumers make purchasing decisions in relation to organic personal care products. This information is worthwhile to marketers as well.

The study uses the theory of planned behaviour to examine Malaysian consumer's purchasing behaviour on organic personal care products, such as attitudes toward buying organic personal care products, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control (AJZEN, 2019) and also demographic factors which are also one of the key indicators that will influence purchasing intentions. There are many studies conducted on organic products but not specifically on organic personal care products. Generation Y, or Millennials, are those born between 1981 and 1996. They are currently between 25 and 40 years old. They are the potential target group to investigate as they are already in the working world and can afford to spend their money on organic products. Additionally, the price of organic products is relatively higher compared to synthetic products due to the price of raw materials, the availability of the resources, the manufacturing time and the cost of packaging materials. These will influence the purchasing power of Generation Y on organic products. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the factors that influence generation Y's purchase intentions in relation to organic personal care products.

2. Literature Review

The market for organically produced goods has developed significantly. Nowadays, it is easy and convenient to buy organic products in the market. Organic products can be separated into two categories; food and non-food products. Examples of food products are biscuits, yogurts, soy milk and others, whereas, for non-food products including things such as personal care products, nutritional supplements and others. Ngobo (2011) explained that "many agree that organic products are refer to a product that made without the use of conventional fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, or genetically modified components". Hence, without those ingredients used, it will also cause lesser harm to the environment. Furthermore, consumer's demand for organic products has also grown rapidly worldwide. According to the Organic Trade Association (2004), the organic agriculture sector has become a worldwide phenomenon that has over 59 million acres around the world. In addition, USA and Europe have the greatest organic consumption, but at the same time there is also a developing trend in many other countries (Willer & Lernoud, 2019). Therefore, when there is an increase in demand for organic products, there will always be an increase in supply for organic products.

As mentioned by Schifferstein and Ophuis (1998), organic consumption is "a part of a way of life. It is a result from an ideology, which was connected to a particular value system that affects personality measures, attitude and also their purchase behavior" (Du et. al., 2017). Therefore, some researches have started to link the relationship between organic consumption and the level of consumers' need in higher-level personal and social identity (Bartels & Reinders, 2016; Dean, Raats & Shepherd, 2012; Krystallis, Vassallo & Chryssohoidis, 2012). Although there is fast growth in sales for organic personal care products, most of the

existing research focuses on marketing strategies rather than consumer behaviour. Researchers need to have an in-depth understanding of consumer behaviour for this product category to have better marketing strategies in targeting their potential consumers (Yeon Kim & Chung, 2011). Furthermore, although there are studies that investigate consumers' attitude and purchasing behaviours of green product (Yeon Kim & Chung, 2011; Padel & Foster, 2005; Zanoli & Naspetti, 2002), most of the studies focus mainly on organic products in European countries only but rarely discuss organic products in Asian countries, specifically Malaysia.

2.1 Consumer Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is an advance from the term "intention". The study of intention originates from social science (Tan et. al., 2017). Purchase intention is an acknowledged variable in marketing which explains consumer behaviour in decision making (Khalid et. al., 2018). Cultures and sub-cultures are some of the factors that influence purchase intention in displaying consumption behaviour. In addition, there are differences between the term and concept of intention and attitude (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Intention will guide a person to express in certain ways and implies the term "I should do", "I will do" and "I am going to do" (Triandis, 1977). Intention to purchase is the probability that a consumer will purchase an item or services provided. It is an acknowledged desire to execute a certain action. This is commonly known as buyer purchase intention in consumer behaviour and marketing research (Khalid et. al., 2018). Simultaneously, purchase intention is also known as an important element with consumer behaviour intention to purchase (Su & Huang, 2010). This may help to predict the products or specific brands they are willing to purchase in their next purchase.

2.2 Attitude

Attitude is one of the factors in the theory of planned behaviour raised by (Ajzen, 1985). Attitude can be known as an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performance (Azjen, 1980). Moreover, attitude also means the result of a behavioural beliefs and also the evaluation of an outcome. Behavioural belief refers to a person that believes in the consequences of engaging in a certain behaviour whereby the evaluation of a result is referring to the relevant favourable or unfavourable judgment with the possible outcomes of the behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). Researchers have previously studied the effect of specific environmental values (Leiserowitz et. al., 2006) on behaviours (Dietz, Fitzgerald & Shwom, 2005). For instance, previous studies show that the environment attitude is a good predictor of the willingness of a consumer to pay extra for green products, such as organic food or organic personal care products (Nixon et. al., 2009). Attitude is a performance whereby consumers believe in organic products which will be useful in meeting their nutritional needs (Singh & Verma, 2017). Hence, the below hypothesis between the two variables has been developed:

H1: *There is a significant relationship between attitude and consumer purchase intention for organic personal care products.*

2.3 Subjective Norm

Subjective norm is defined as "the perceived social pressure influence it to perform or not perform the certain behaviour" (AJZEN, 2019). At the same time, subjective norm is an opinion by a person who is important to decision maker (Park, 2000). When a person is within a group, there are some regulations or norms as well as some specific beliefs which explains the proper consumption behaviour. Therefore, subjective norm can be separated into two main categories which is result of normative belief and motivation to achieve. The result of normative belief is known as perception about the way people will behave in a particular situation with the one that he/she felt significant with. On the other hand, motivation to achieve refers to a person who is likely to comply with the opinion of others. Important people who may influence the individual can be anyone such as family, friends or colleagues. Once an individual believes these important people, the individual approves or

disapproves of their behavior (Conner & Armitage, 1998). As mentioned by Yeon Kim and Chung (2011), when individuals believe that the people who are important to them think a particular skin care product is good, the consumer will usually have higher purchase intentions. Therefore, the purchase intentions of such products has a significant effect by subjective norm. Hence, the below hypothesis between the two variables has been developed:

H2: *There is a significant relationship between subjective norms and consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products.*

2.4 Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioural control refers to the degree of control that people perceive as easy or difficult when they perform certain behaviours (Azjen, 1980). There are two different characteristics which result from control of beliefs and perceived power. Control of belief may facilitate or impede the performance of a certain behaviour by a belief of a person towards the presence of a particular factor. AJZEN (2019) states that "the perceived power refer to a personal evaluation which impact these factors in facilitating or impeding the certain behaviour". It can also be categorized as internal and external perceived behavioural control. "When a person has higher internal perceived behavioural control, it will cause them to have more control on the internal personnel resources, example like the skills that required, confidence, the planning skill and ability which all are required to perform a certain behaviour" (Armitage & Conner, 1999). On the other hand, external perceived behavioural control explains the individuals' perception to overcome external limitations by using their ability, such as time and money (Kidwell & Jewell, 2003). Meanwhile, external and internal perceived behavioural control might be a step in forming a favourable or unfavourable attitude to a certain behavior. Hence, the below hypothesis between two variables has been developed:

H3: *There is a significant relationship between perceived behavioural control and consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products.*

2.5 Demographic Characteristics

Demographic factors seem to be important because different factors might have different outcomes on purchase intentions. Research by Teng et. al. (2018) shows that female consumers tend to purchase environmentally friendly products more often compared to male consumers. According to Magnusson et. al. (2001), younger consumers between the ages of 18 – 25 years old are more likely to purchase organic products than older generations. Income level also is one of the reasons consumers are willing to purchase organic products. Due to the high cost of organic products compared to convenience products, consumers with lower income are less likely to purchase them (Rahim et. al., 2017). Education level is also one of the important factors which may lead to a different outcome. According to a study by Kaufmann, Panni & Orphanidou (2012), people who are more knowledgeable will be more concerned with environmental problems leading them to purchase organic products. Along with that, different race will lead to the different purchase intention (Tan et. al., 2017). Therefore, there is an interest to investigate the differences between consumer purchase intentions and demographic characteristics. The following hypotheses have been developed for this purpose:

H4a: *There is a significant difference in consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products between gender*.

H4b: *There is a significant difference in consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products between age.*

H4c: *There is a significant difference in consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products between income level*.

H4d: *There is a significant difference in consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care product between education level*.

H4e: *There is a significant difference in consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care product between races (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Du, Bartels, Reinders & Sen, 2017; Kian et. al., 2017; Kit et. al., 2018).*

3. Research Methodology

Figure 1 shows the research framework of this study. The research framework is developed based on the theory of planned behaviour adopted from study by AJZEN (2019). The variables of attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control are adopted from Ghazali, Soon, Mutum and Nguyen (2017) and the demographic factors (including gender, age, income level, education level and races) are adopted from research by Singh and Verma (2017) which are used to investigate generation Y's purchase intentions for organic personal care products. This research covers the distribution of questionnaires, data collection, analyses of data and reporting of the final results and findings. There are two type of methods used to collect data; face-to-face questionnaires and web surveys through a Google form. A total of 155 questionnaires have been distributed with 152 questionnaires collected for data analysis using SPSS. In short, the tests conducted in this study include a reliability test, normality test, frequency analysis, t-test, ANOVA and Multiple Linear Regression.

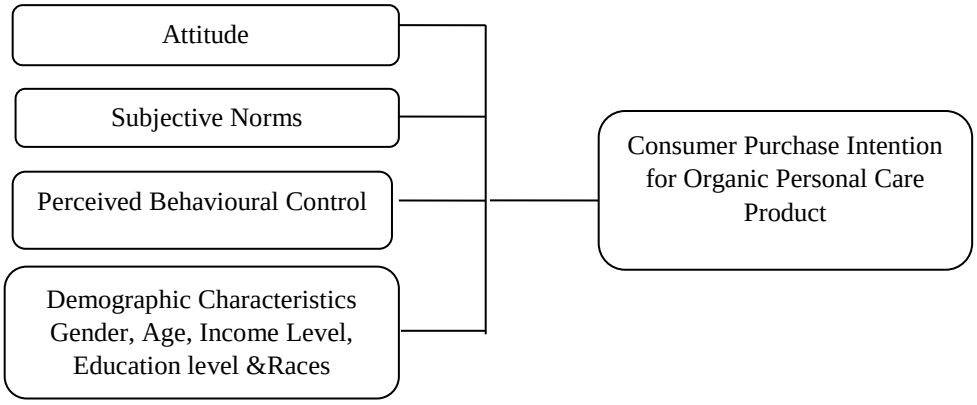


Figure 1. Research framework

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the summary of reliability and normality tests of the dependent and all of the independent variables for this research. The results show that all of the Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.8000 which means the variables are reliable and acceptable. Based on the Normality test, all of the variables are normally distributed.

Table 1. Reliability and Normality Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Purchase Intention	0.867	-1.383	0.197	3.217	0.391

Attitude	0.828	-0.437	0.197	-0.191	0.391
Subjective Norm	0.806	-1.216	0.197	2.518	0.391
Purchase Behavioural Control	0.803	-1.363	0.197	2.895	0.391

Table 2 shows the hypotheses testing of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Attitude and subjective norms have a significant relationship with consumer purchase intentions. However, perceived behavioural control is found to be no significant relationship with consumer purchase intentions. In addition, attitude is also identified as the most important factor that influences consumer purchase intentions in relation to organic personal care products as it has the highest coefficient beta of (0.409) followed by subjective norms (0.261). According to Table 3 and 4, there are 5 hypotheses tested in respect of demographic characteristics, with 4 of the tested factors (gender, age, income level and educational level) being supported. This proves that there is a significant difference in consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products between gender, age, income level and education level. Race is found not to have an impact on purchase intentions. Hence, there is no significant difference in consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products between races.

Table 2. Summary of Multiple Linear Regression

Ha	Hypothesis	Dependent – Consumer Purchase Intention		
		Standardized Beta	**Sig.**	**Finding**
H1	Attitude	0.409	0.000	Supported
H2	Subjective Norms	0.261	0.002	Supported
H3	Perceived Behavioural Control	0.142	0.093	Not Supported

Note: Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3. Summary of T-Test

Ha	Hypothesis	Dependent – Consumer Purchase Intention	
		Sig.	**Finding**
H4a	Gender	0.012	Supported

Note: Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4. Summary of ANOVA Test

Ha	Hypothesis	Dependent - Consumer Purchase Intention	
		Sig.	**Finding**
H4b	Age	0.045	Supported
H4c	Income level	0.021	Supported
H4d	Education level	0.016	Supported
H4e	Races	0.445	Not Supported

Note: Significant at 0.05 level

5. Conclusion

This research aims to identify the relationship between the factors that influence generation Y's purchase intentions in relation to organic personal care products. The results conclude that attitude and subjective norms will influence the purchase intention for organic personal care products among generation Y consumers. The results also reveal that there is a significant difference in consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products among the 4 demographic characteristics namely (gender, age, income level and education level).

This study identifies that females have a higher intention to purchase organic personal care products. This is also consistent with the study of Teng et. al. (2018). Female consumers are more careful when choosing personal care products, and their awareness about the harmful effects of chemicals and synthetic products is generally higher. Older aged group respondents between 36 - 40 years old have higher intention to purchase organic personal care products. The study also shows that higher income respondents are found to have higher intentions to purchase. A study by Rahim et. al. (2017) showed that lower income consumers do not intend to purchase organic products as often.

Further, people who are more knowledgeable are more likely to be more concerned with environmental problems causing them to purchase organic products (Kaufmann, Panni & Orphanidou, 2012).Whereas, race and perceived behavioural control have no significant influence on the purchase intentions for organic personal care products among generation Y consumers. Additionally, the differences for consumer purchase intentions for organic personal care products among demographic factors will indicate the key clients. Hence, it will provide a better direction to marketers to focus on the specific target market for organic personal care products. With that, they can apply the right strategy for the right target market and right segmentation.

Last but not least, it will also benefit future researchers to study more on this topic. Some of the limitations of this research includes location coverage, the number of respondents and also the variables tested in the study. Future research may include more states in Malaysia, increase the number of respondent while the data collected may be not only from generation Y consumers who are Malaysian but also non-Malaysian consumers who migrated to this country or study in Malaysia. More variable can be used to investigate this phenomenon, such as product knowledge and past experience with organic personal care products. When a consumer knows the value of the product, they are more willing to pay for the price although it is slightly higher. At the same time, past experience can also be a very important variable affecting the decision by consumers due to their trust in that specific product. Consumers will choose a brand that they have used before or have knowledge of rather than a new brand that they have limited information on or experience with.

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