

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PURCHASE INTENTION OF ORGANIC  
PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my father, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my mother, who taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at a time.

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## ABSTRACT

Purchase intention measures the behaviour of the consumer in buying a product. The emergence of organic market has created a demand for beauty and personal care products. Therefore, many factors that lead to the purchase intention of consumers need to be realised by marketers in order to maximise sales and competitiveness in the current marketplace. This study investigated consumer values of personal (environmental consciousness, religious obligation) and perceived (quality and safety) that influence attitude toward the purchase intention of organic personal care product as well as the mediating effect of attitude and mediator roles of brand trust. Hence, purposive sampling technique was employed and a total of 165 female respondents has participated in the quantitative survey of structured self-administrative questionnaires following its validation and constructions before subjected to analysis using structural equation model in SMARTPLS Software. The findings revealed that purchase intention in the consumers was moderate and attitude were powerful force in influencing the buying behaviour. This study also extends the Theory of Planned Behaviour by including perceived value dimensions as the antecedents of attitude in the model. The findings supported most of the hypothesised relationships linking the personal and perceived factors with attitude toward consumer's purchase intention of organic personal care products. Improved labelling on the packaging would lead to a more positive attitude toward purchase intention by increasing consumer's confidence via brand trust. In contrast, perceived safety value was not important in predicting attitude. Similarly, the influence of religion obligation on purchase intention was not supported. In terms of ranking with regards to the prediction of purchase intention, environmental consciousness was the most important predictor followed by the perceived quality value.

## ABSTRAK

Niat membeli boleh mengukur kelakuan pengguna dalam membeli produk. Kemunculan pasaran organik telah mewujudkan permintaan untuk produk kecantikan dan penjagaan diri. Oleh itu, banyak faktor yang menyebabkan niat membeli pengguna perlu dikuasai oleh pemasar untuk memaksimumkan jualan dan menjadi kompetitif di pasaran semasa. Kajian ini menyiasat nilai-nilai pengguna peribadi (kesedaran alam sekitar, kewajipan keagamaan) dan nilai-nilai persepsi pengguna (kualiti dan keselamatan) dalam mempengaruhi sikap terhadap niat membeli produk penjagaan diri organik serta kesan mediasi sikap dan perantara kepercayaan kepada jenama. Oleh itu, teknik persampelan bertujuan telah digunakan, dan seramai 165 responden perempuan telah mengambil bahagian dalam kaji selidik kuantitatif berstruktur menggunakan soal selidik sendiri berikutan pengesahan dan pembinaannya sebelum tertakluk kepada analisis menggunakan model persamaan struktur dalam Perisian SMARTPLS. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa niat membeli di kalangan pengguna adalah sederhana, dan faktor sikap adalah sangat berkuasa dalam mempengaruhi tingkah laku pembeli. Kajian ini juga memperluaskan Teori Tingkah laku yang Dirancang dengan memasukkan dimensi nilai tanggapan yang boleh membentuk sikap dalam model. Penemuan ini menyokong sebahagian besar hubungan yang berpandangan jauh dalam menghubungkan nilai peribadi, faktor tanggapan, dan sikap terhadap niat pembelian produk penjagaan diri organik. Pembaikan pada pelabelan diatas pembungkusan akan membawa kepada sikap yang lebih positif terhadap niat membeli dengan meningkatkan keyakinan pengguna melalui kepercayaan kepada jenama. Sebaliknya, nilai keselamatan telah dianggap tidak penting dalam meramalkan sikap. Begitu juga, pengaruh kewajipan agama terhadap niat membeli tidak disokong. Dari segi kedudukan terhadap ramalan niat membeli, kesedaran tentang alam sekitar merupakan peramal yang paling penting diikuti pula oleh tanggapan nilai kualiti.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ENT	-	Environmental awareness
AT	-	Attitude
REL	-	Religious obligation
SAF	-	Safety
QUA	-	Quality
PES	-	Personal Factors
PEC	-	Perception Factors
BT	-	Brand Trust
PU	-	Purchase intention
LVS	-	Latent Variable Score
SEM	-	Structural Equation Modelling
AVE	-	Average Variance Extracted
CA	-	Cronbach's Alpha
CR	-	Composite Reliability
EFA	-	Exploratory Factor Analysis
HTMT	-	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations
HOC	-	High Order Construct
LOC	-	Low Order Construct
R <sup>2</sup>	-	Coefficient of Determination
VAF	-	Variance among Factors

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter begin with an overview of the study, statement of problems, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study and the key terms used in the study. These are followed with discussion on the contribution of the study. Finally, this chapter ends with an outline of the entire thesis.

### 1.2 Background of The Study

Beauty and personal care products have always been the attention of many people especially women. In Malaysia, the industry of beauty and personal care products continue to record positive growth each year (Ghazali, Soon, Mutum and Nguyen, 2017). The rising of consumer awareness on hazardous synthetic chemicals and environmental deterioration has influenced the need for a healthy lifestyle and organic green products. Hence, the market for green and organic cosmetics is expanding globally as well locally (Yunus, Mat Som, Abdul Majid, Aziz and Khalid, 2018).

The force of this go-green awareness has reached the Asians, as many environmental threatening issues been debated imposes the government and local citizen to do some action (Lee, 2008). The go-green concept is novel to Malaysian consumers, as a result, many campaigns have continuously been conducted to educate them (Golnaz, Phuah, Zainalabidin and Mad Nasir, 2013) and greener action as well as products were introduced to the consumer. For example, the government has imposed no plastic bag to be used in shopping places during weekend and encouraged usage of biodegradable plastic bags (Saleh Omar, Quoquab and

Mohammad, 2019). Following this, manufacturers started to produce organic products in many industries namely clothing, food, cosmetics and personal care product.

Organic personal care product refers to a high-quality product with minimal usage of chemicals. Some of the products offer features like the eco-friendly, environmentally friendly, biodegradable and chemical-free product. Natural herbs were also used as the main ingredient of the product, which was plant-based and suitable for vegetarians. The products were not tested on animals and did not consist of any bi-product of an animal.

The behaviour of the consumer toward organic and green product would depend on their understanding and knowledge of the product. While the westerners viewed green product and its related initiative indirectly cause less harm to the environment, Malaysian consumers feel that green products as “speciality-high priced” product and specifically intended for a certain group of consumers (Shahnaei, 2012). A survey conducted in 2008 by Information group Taylor Nelson Sofres on the aspect of Malaysians eco-friendliness behaviour and habits, revealed that only 8 per cent of the consumers indicated that they have changed their attitude in a way that greatly benefits the environment (Sharaf, Isa and Al-Qasa, 2015). Perhaps, other factors could have acting in persuading the attitude toward purchasing of these organic products. Other than environmental consciousness, values like quality and safety could have influenced these consumers. The fact that multi-racial and -religion background of consumers in Malaysia, a more recent survey and study could be beneficial to evaluate their current attitude.

Pressures from government and environmentalists for ecological approaches have forced the manufacturers to alter their way in producing more greener approach despite the actual demand from the market for an organic product. Thus, marketers need to understand the business world especially consumers and devise a suitable marketing strategy to be competitive in today’s market.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Recent studies suggested that evidence on consumers' purchasing intention and behaviour with regards to organic personal care products in Malaysia is still limited (Ghazali et al., 2017; Mohammad, 2017; Tseng and Chang, 2015). Majority of studies were conducted on explaining the relation of consumer purchase intention by characterising the perceived values of consumers for buying green or natural products (Ghazali et al., 2017; Johnstone, and Yang, 2016; Schleenbecker and Hamm, 2013). Given the current trends in organic and the increased demand for organic products, much attention has been given to the rapid growth of organic food. However, little was known about the different factor that could lead the consumer intention in decision making toward organic personal care product. Thus, this study sought to provide additional insight as well as to determine factors for understanding the behaviour of consumers in purchasing organic personal care product in the marketplace while incorporating the aspect of mediation and moderation role.

To date, many analogies exist between consumer choices regarding organic foods and organic personal care products. (Beltran, 2019; Chu, 2018, Ghazali et al., 2017; Teng and Wang, 2015; Wang, 2015). Thus, it has been suggested that the future study using empirical quantitative method and utilising some findings from previous study related to the organic food produce on consumer values and its relation to the purchase intention and behaviour may facilitate understanding on consumers' choices for organic personal care products and green marketing (Ghazali et al., 2017; Alena and Bilal, 2014). Practically, this would serve the gaps between marketing and sales manager's as the outcome could be one of the primary inputs for forecasting future sales and dictating the best actions that would impact consumers' purchase behaviour.

Malaysia has recorded positive growth in the specific industry, which is mostly focusing on women. In 2016, cosmetic products worth of \$280 million of recognised brands such as Cosmodern, Ginvera, Forest Secret, Bio-essence and Silky Girl were exported out of Malaysia (Cosmetics Export to grow faster this year, *The Malaysian Reserve*, 2017). Being the second largest industry after organic food,

beauty and personal care products have received less attention from the researchers (Saleem and Recker, 2014). The factors that govern particularly intention and behaviour of consumer in buying these organic products with the correlation of their personal and perceived values are still obscure and need to be elucidated (Tan, Johnstone, Yang, 2016; Thorsoe, Christensen and Povlsen , 2016; Schleenbecker and Hamm, 2013).

Though dominant factors in consumer's purchase intention were known, other factors such as personal values and perceptions values had shown low to moderate significant values by affecting various consumer groups such as urbanite and conventional (Tan, Johnstone, Yang, 2016; Rahbar and Wahid, 2010). Further, varying studies' outcome of consumers personal values on purchasing intention of organic products suggests that environmental consciousness and consumers attitude affects consumer decision on purchasing organic products (Ghazali et al, 2017; Azizan and Suki, 2016; Ling 2013). Government policies and pressures from environmentalist could contribute to the difference in the behaviour of consumers towards green marketing and organic products according to localities. Furthermore, the wide promotion of religion and accessibility of knowledge through social media and the internet could impact the consumers' decision and attitude.

Nevertheless, the market for organic product may constitute an important sector in Malaysia especially for personal care products because it has become part of the urban culture (FMI, 2015). Besides, the transitions of Asian consumers into herbal and organic products been demonstrated by the increasing rate of organic market's annual growth of 9.7% during the forecast year of 2014 to 2020 has shown that organic products were becoming appealing in this region. Hence, understanding the underlying factors that influence these consumers is vital for developing a competitive advantage that will be sustainable in the future.

The current situation in Malaysia, many studies were conducted on organic food industry (Ibrahim, Hall and Ballantine, 2019; Mohd Suki, 2018; Haris et al., 2018; Hassan, Yee and Ray, 2015) compared to organic personal care products. (Ghazali et al., 2017; Abd Rahman, Asrarhaghi and Abd Rahman, 2015; Ahmad,

Omar and Rose, 2015) So far, only eight studies that specifically described the attitude of consumers in purchasing organic personal care (mostly cosmetics) that were obtained mainly from certain states of Malaysia. One of the recent study conducted by Suki (2016) identified that 60 out of 100 (60%) of women decision on buying organic cosmetic were based on attitude values. Meanwhile, another study done by Ghazali et al. (2017) in two major cities of Malaysia only focuses on the factors that influence the re-purchase of consumer toward organic personal care product instead of the intention of purchase. Whereas, a study by Wee, Ariff, Zakuan, Tajudin, Ismail and Ishak (2014) put focus on the actual purchase. By far, very few studies have reported on mediating aspect of attitude (Sharaf, 2015; Aman, Haron and Hussein, 2012; Yeon Kim and Chung (2011), meanwhile two studies have reported on significant moderator roles of perceived benefits (Ismail and Mokhtar, 2016) and the willingness to pay (Ling, 2013) toward purchase intention. However, the effect of consumers' values on attitude while simultaneously investigating mediating and moderating roles toward purchase intention of personal care products in major cities of Malaysia has not yet been reported.

Though many studies revealed relationship between attitude and purchase intention, their original relationship could be altered by the presence of mediating and moderating factors. Hence, these factors of perceived and personal values including brand trust in mediating and moderating the relationship could not be disregarded. Nevertheless, without the current information on the level of purchase intention of organic personal care product, the overall behaviour of the consumers could not be achieved. The main concern has raised in environmental values that are well known serve as major determinant of purchasing personal care products in many western countries and now in Asia countries, which now are making transition into green consumerism as well as competing in becoming leaders in manufacturing personal care products in Asian region. The marketing practitioner and manager need to assess precisely the factors that consumer value and predict the acceptance of green and organic product in the market. Hence, based on this importance and findings of previous studies, has led us to determine the level of consumer purchase intention among consumer in Malaysia, the relationships of values and attitude toward purchase intention of organic personal care product as well as mediating role of attitude and moderating effect of brand trust towards purchase intention. It is

comprehensive findings, which would be valuable in predicting market trends and poses theoretical and practical importance to marketers and business owners.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the research background and problem statements, this study seeks to address the following research questions.

1. What is the level of consumer purchase intention among consumer in Malaysia?
2. Does personal values and / or perceived values has significant relationship between attitude toward purchase intention?
3. Does attitude mediates the relationship toward purchase intention?
4. Does brand trust have moderates the relationship between attitude and purchase intention?

#### **1.5 Research Objectives**

The following were the general objectives of this study :

1. To determine the level of consumer purchase intention behaviour among consumer in Malaysia toward organic personal care product.
2. To determine whether the consumer personal values and/ or perceived values has significant relationship between attitude toward purchase intention.
3. To examine whether consumer attitude mediates the relationship towards purchase intention.
4. To examine whether brand trust moderates the relationship between consumer attitude and purchase intention.

## **1.6 Operational Definition of Terms**

Some important terms appearing frequently in this study are briefly defined as follows:

### **1. Personal care product**

The personal care product industry includes a wide range of products dedicated to health and beauty, including perfumes, sunscreen, hair and skincare products, cosmetics and toothpaste.

### **2. Organic Personal Care Product**

Organic personal care products offer a high percentage of organic ingredients such as organic herbal and plants extract, with no sulphates, parabens, phthalates, artificial colours and artificial fragrances (Kim, Hee, and Chung, 2011).

### **3. Purchasing intention**

The consumer develops a behavioural action intention regarding the likelihood to do an action, which is buying an organic product. Having the intention will lead the consumer to perform specific behaviour (Tarkiainen, and Sundqvist (2005).

### **4. Consumer's attitude**

The consumer's attitude in this study focuses on consumer's likes and dislikes of the product. Attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour and disfavour (Eagly and Chaiken, 1998).

## 5. Consumer's environmental consciousness

This is the consumers' concerns about green issues that influence their attitude towards a product and purchase behaviour's especially for the ecological or environmentally friendly product (Dagher, Grace, Itani, and Kassar, 2015).

## 6. Religiosity obligation

Religiosity obligation means the consumers are alert of whether the product meets their religious principles that influence on consumer values, habit and attitude (Evans, Sutterfield, Morgan, and Mandella, 2012)

## 7. Perceived Quality of Product

Perceived consumer values on the product quality signify consumer's attitude towards the product as to whether the product meets the standard quality and expectation, based on their performance and smell (Mondelaers, Koen, Verbeke, and Huylenbroeck, 2009).

## 8. Perceived Product safety

Perceived consumer values on product safety indicate consumer's attitude as either the product meet the safety standard of a product and their expectation. The consumer value a product based on its product safety attribute (Arvanitoyannis, Krystallis, 2005).

## 9. Brand trust

Brand trust is the willingness of an average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function ( Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001).



## **1.7 Scope of The Study**

This study was conducted among consumers in Malaysia through purposive sampling, which focuses on female consumers who have at least experienced using organic product and have bought an organic personal care product in the past three months. The consumers filled the questionnaires prepared for the study at a mall intercept conducted in three main cities of Southern Malaysia. Thus, this study examines Malaysian consumers' attitudes toward the purchase intention of organic personal care product and seeks to understand the relationship between personal and perceived values toward purchase intention. Based on an extensive review of the literature, the study focuses on the factor of environment, religiosity, quality and safety value. Identification of the effect of each factor and its relationship towards purchase intention relating to organic personal care product ensures a greater understanding of the consumers in Malaysia that will have both theoretical and practical significance for marketers.

## **1.8 Significance of The Research**

The study also expands on Ajzen (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and develops a conceptual model which links intention to the consumer buying behaviour. From perceived values to green consumers' attitudes, which in turn influence their purchase intention into buying a product. In particular, by investigating the effect of attitude, personal and perceived values on purchase intention, the framework is tested and validated in the context of organic personal care product. In doing so, several theoretical implications arisen from the current study.

Another important contribution of this study is that it focuses on purchase intentions as opposed to re-purchase intentions. In other words, this study examines factors influencing purchase intentions, which mainly to reveal the underlying factors that motivate purchasing for the first time. The outcome of this study, which was published in 2017 was among the earliest to study the influence of specific consumers' personal and perceived values, such as environmental consciousness,

religiosity consciousness, perceived quality, perceived safety while incorporating the mediating aspect of attitude and moderating role of brand trust toward purchase intentions of organic personal care product in Malaysia (Mohammad et al., 2017). Other published studies that investigated purchase intention of organic personal care products from year 2011 till 2016 had either focuses on actual purchase or re-purchase intention and includes only cosmetic products as well as evaluates factors other than being included in the current study. Hence, this study that was being conducted in three main cities of Malaysia extended the previous studies by specifically investigating purchase intention of local organic personal care brand originated from Malaysia.

Though many of such studies have been conducted in the western countries, the findings could not be generalised in Malaysia, considering the multi-racial and multi-religion background of the consumers. Thus, the scope of understanding consumer behaviour must be extended to the Asian region especially in countries with similar socio-demography and economic background. The study has also extended previous research on organic products, such as foods and cosmetics, which showed that concerns regarding health, safety and environment are the key motivators for consumer choices.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study are important for the development of the organic industry in the Asian region, while little research has been done. As an integral part of the economic system, the organic goods industry in Malaysian is an important sector that recently has shown a remarkable improvement in its industry. Realising the trend that would continue to evolve in an increasingly dynamic business environment, it is crucial to put the initiative in understanding the consumers through research. The purchase intentions could be used as measures to predict the demand for new products as well as formulating the right marketing mix to maximise sales.

Nevertheless, this study is expected to benefit several industries-linked parties, most importantly the marketers and manufacturers. Hence, the outcome of

the study could be translated into strategies by considering the consumer's satisfaction and expectation of the organic personal care product.

## 1.9 Organization of The Remaining Chapters

This thesis is divided into five main chapters. The first was an introductory chapter that includes research background, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives and scope, as well as the significance of the study. The second chapter represents the literature review followed by the third chapter that explained the methodology of this study, including research design, data collection and analysis of the data. Next, the fourth chapter detailed the findings and statistical results of the hypotheses before and the findings been discussed in the fifth chapter. This chapter also revealed the theoretical and practical contribution of the findings as well as limitation of the study research and recommendations for future research.

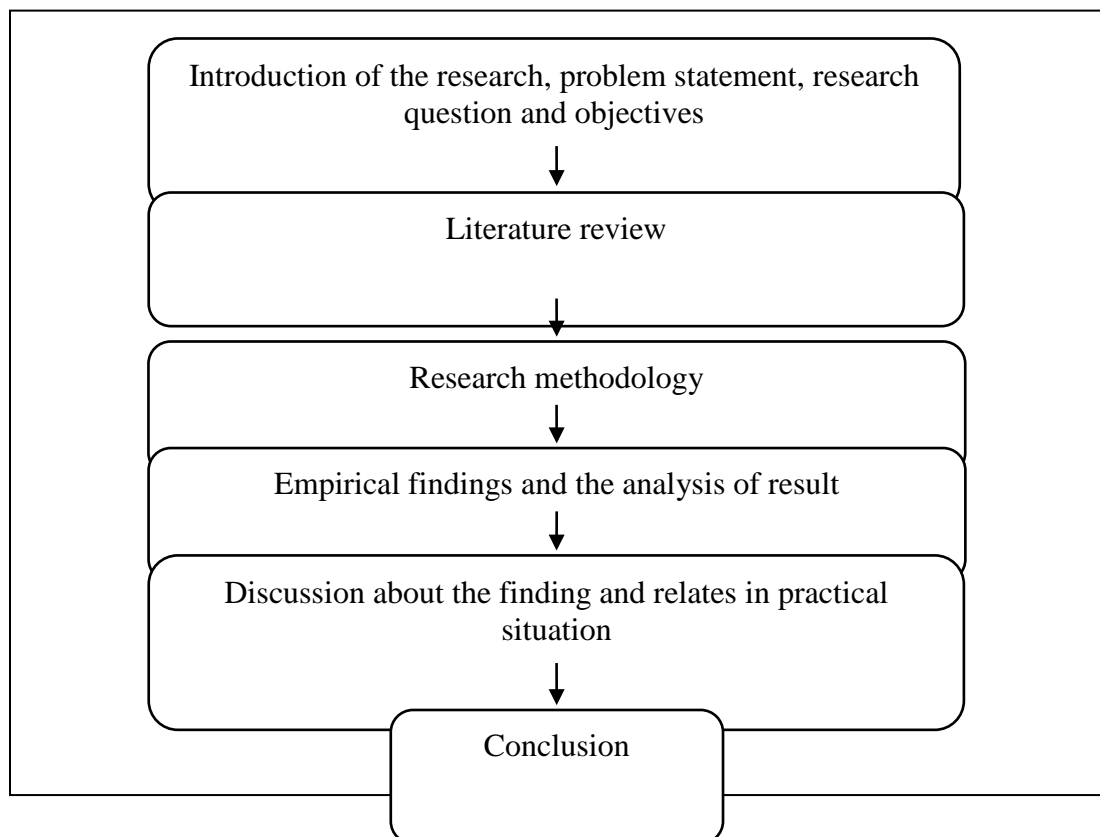


Figure 1.1 Organization of the thesis

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