



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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ISSN: 2222-6990

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i6/8487>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i6/8487

Received: 08 April 2021, **Revised:** 11 May 2021, **Accepted:** 24 May 2021

Published Online: 14 June 2021

In-Text Citation: (Daud & Hee, 2021)

To Cite this Article: Daud, F. N. M., & Hee, O. C. (2021). The Mediating Role of Brand Love in Predicting Green Purchase Behaviour of Organic Cosmetic Products. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(6), 669–676.

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Vol. 11, No. 6, 2021, Pg. 669- 676

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The Mediating Role of Brand Love in Predicting Green Purchase Behaviour of Organic Cosmetic Products

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Abstract

This paper looks into the past studies pertaining to green purchase behaviour, particularly across the cosmetics industry, which is still scarce in number despite its flourishing business and gaining much attention from the industry players. The literature affirms a pressing need to assess green purchase behaviour in organic cosmetics as cosmetic users are unprotected from side effects due to use of skincare and cosmetics products. As such, this study investigated the factors that influenced green purchase behaviour towards organic cosmetic products. From the lens of the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV); perceived quality, perceived price, peer influence, knowledge, health consciousness, and brand love were incorporated into the conceptual framework of this study. Essentially, correlations among perceived quality, perceived price, peer influence, knowledge, and health consciousness of green purchase behaviour in organic cosmetics were assessed. The mediating role of brand love was examined in the research model. This study involved cosmetic users within the vicinity of Malaysia and 147 minimum samples had been required for this study based on the Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Judgemental sampling techniques and quantitative approach were adopted, along with SPSS and SmartPLS as the analysis tools. This study offers theoretical and managerial implications in the area of green purchase behaviour.

Keywords: Green Purchase Behaviour, Cosmetics, Theory Of Consumption Values, Perceived Quality, Perceived Price, Peer Influence, Knowledge, Health Consciousness, Brand Love, Mediator

Introduction

Green products have become trending across various sectors, including food, agriculture, tourism, construction, energy, automobiles, home improvement, and consumer durables, primarily due to green efforts (Kwong & Balaji, 2016). Most studies in the Western hemisphere have focused on green marketing, while investigations on green branding and green buying behaviour are in scarcity across developing countries, including in Malaysia (Yadav & Pathak, 2016; Konuk, 2015; Juwaheer *et al.*, 2012; Hartmann & Ibanez, 2006) as the consumers care less about the environment when compared to consumers in developed countries (Maichum, Parichatnon, & Peng, 2016; Modi, Patel & Paul, 2016). Additionally, studies on purchase of eco-friendly personal care, cosmetic appliances, and other products

are limited in number (Liobikienė, Mandravickaitė, & Bernatoniene, 2016; Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012; Kim and Chung, 2011).

Both developing and developed nations are experiencing evolution of the expanding cosmetics industry (Hassali *et al.*, 2015). Nonetheless, new trends concerning cosmetics have made changes to how Malaysians purchase organic cosmetics, hence the significance of exploring the cosmetics segment (Nguyen & Rowley, 2015; Dutta & Youn, 1999). According to Malaysia's Director General of Health (2017) and Jaini, Quoquab, Mohammad and Hussin (2019) more than 12,000 cosmetics products contain high usage of chemicals and poisonous ingredients. Cosmetics with hazardous ingredients, such as mercury, hydroquinone, and dexamethasone, not only kill animals and plants killing or cause pollution by rinsing down drains into oceans, lakes, or rivers; but also adversely affect the health of consumers by causing irregular heartbeat, hypertension, cataract, kidney failure, high blood glucose level, and cushing syndrome - which all can lead to chronic ailments.

Consumers are concerned about the ingredients of the products they use to ensure that they are safe for consumption (Pudaruth, Juwaheer, & Seewoo, 2015; Johri & Sahasakmontri, 1998). In attempting to improve appearance and maintain youth look, chemical-free personal care products are sought (Tirone, 2007). Hence, consumers have shifted from using ordinary cosmetics to organic cosmetics, so as to prevent side effects that may harm their skin and health conditions. As such, this study assessed the behavioural change displayed by consumers in using cosmetics products through the lens of the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV). Besides identifying the mediating effect of brand love, this paper sheds new light on the theory.

Literature Review

Green Purchase Behaviour

Consumer behaviour refers to the pattern of consumer purchasing products and commonly applied by marketers (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2014). Green purchase behaviour denotes the act of purchasing green products deriving from green purchase intention as the motivation factor or consumption of products that contribute to the environment, which can be recycled and conscious towards environmental issues (Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Lee, 2009; Mostafa, 2007). Prior studies revealed that more than 30% of consumers, who were concerned about ecology, did not indulge in actual green purchase behaviour (Young, Hwang, McDonald, & Oates, 2010). Most studies reported inconsistency between willingness or intention and actual behaviour of consumers on environment-friendly behaviour (Crane, 2000; Mintel, 1995). In the Western countries, research work that linked green purchase intention and green purchase behaviour concluded mixed results. Some displayed strong relationship between intention and behaviour (Rezai *et al.*, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2010; Bamberg & Möser, 2007; Bamberg, 2003; Chan, 2001; Chan & Lau, 2000; R. Y. Chan & Yam, 1995), while other found weak or non-existing relationship (Trivedi, Patel, & Acharya, 2018; Akehurst *et al.*, 2012; Crane, 2000; Wong *et al.*, 1996). As depicted in the literature, some common factors associated with consumer behaviour study are knowledge, concern, and effectiveness of consumer to deal with both purchase intention and purchase behaviour for general products (Kumar *et al.*, 2017; Paul *et al.*, 2016; Kim, 2011; Tan, 2011; Kim & Choi, 2005; Mostafa, 2007; Chan, 2001; Straughan and Roberts, 1999). Hence, it is integral to assess the factors of green purchase behaviour in Malaysia, which is in scarcity (Zarirah *et al.*, 2014).

Perceived Quality

Tsiotsou (2006) related perceived quality with the quality of a product as perceived by consumer. Perceived quality is vital to position the intention of customer to purchase a product, especially when repurchase signifies the quality performance of the product that offers satisfaction and fits consumer expectation (Yee & Sidek, 2008). Consumers tend to switch to a different brand if the former brand fails to meet their demand. In light of cosmetics, high-quality products refer to those that can quickly absorb and dry, lightweight, breathable, waterproof, and durable. Prior researcher emphasis that consumers in Malaysia perceived well-known products as high-quality products, when compared to consumers in the United States who assess product quality based on durability, ease of use, and reliability (Pitman, 2015). Choi and Kim (2013); Wu and Chen (2014) asserted that high-quality products lead to increased repurchase intention among consumers (Ariffin, et al., 2016). As for green products, their quality strongly affects the purchasing behaviour of consumers. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis:

H1c: There is a significantly positive relationship between perceived quality and consumer green purchase behaviour.

Perceived Price

Price is the sum of money that a consumer needs to give in exchange of product or service, which also is an attribute to quality. According to Alfred (2013), price of a product has an impact on purchase behaviour. Typically, consumers would consider a range of reasonable prices for the products that they intend to buy (Bojanic, 1996). The added cost in green products, which make them more expensive than ordinary products, can affect the purchase behaviour of consumers (Zhao et al., 2014; Gleim et al., 2013; Ma et al., 2013; Malhotra & Maheshwari, 2011; Zeithaml, 1988). Although the benefits of using green products are highlighted so that consumers become aware of the factors that affect the price (D'Souza et al., 2006; Schlegelmilch et al., 1996), only a handful of consumers are willing to pay higher price for green purchase (Chen & Deng, 2016; Neff, 2012). Most consumers seek products with maximum benefits but low in terms of price, mainly because products with high price are considered as exorbitantly expensive (Marian et al., 2014; Hur et al., 2012). However, although green purchase incurs slightly higher cost, consumers are willing to pay premium price due to the product value (Tsay, 2010). Consumers are generally pleased to pay higher price as they know that green products are worth their money. Consumers with older age and higher income are likely to purchase product with higher price than younger ones (Mohd Suki, 2015; Tsay, 2009). Consumers also adopt price to ease their choices, figure out another substitute, and decide to purchase or otherwise (De Medeiros et al., 2016; Pan et al., 2013). Essentially, price exerts a positive impact on green consumption behaviour (Gonçalves et al., 2016; Biswas and Roy, 2015). Therefore, the following is hypothesised:

Hypothesis:

H2c: There is a significantly positive relationship between perceived price and consumer green purchase.

Peer Influence

Peer influence refers to an individual associated with other people due to similar qualities (Ryan, 2001). It denotes a situation where people share similar values, beliefs, and thoughts with person(s) they communicate with (Nizam et al., 2014). According to Lee (2008), peer influence emerged as the most important factor for adolescent green purchasing behaviour, when compared to other factors. Peer group decision is vital as a significant adolescent consumer choice (Chen-Yu & Seock, 2002). Being part of a peer group, apparently, exhibited positive outcomes, such as college inspiration, engagement in schoolwork, academic motivation, time spent in homework, and excellent achievement (Ryan, 2001).

According to Grubb and Grathwohl (1967), peer influence, which is also known as social peers, differs by culture (Bristol & Mangleburg, 2005; Mourali et al., 2005; Singh et al., 2003; Kim and Kang, 2001; Childers & Rao, 1992). Lee (2008) and Chen-Yu and Seock (2002) found that peer influence exhibited a significant effect on green purchasing behaviour. Family, friends, and colleagues are instances of peer influence that can make consumers believe in a product (Yeo et al., 2016; Pavlou & Chai, 2002). Peer influence has been reported to serve as a predictor for green purchase behaviour, which is effective in reducing doubt towards green products. It was revealed that female consumers were more inclined towards peer influence than male consumers (Lee, 2009; Lee, 2008). Thus, this study draws the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis:

H3c: There is a significantly positive relationship between peer influence and consumer green purchase behaviour.

Product Knowledge

Product knowledge is defined as the way consumers perceived certain products (Beatty & Smith, 1987). Knowledge is integral in triggering consumers to purchase new products (Awuni & Du, 2015), as well as to control one's ability in assembling product attribution and criteria (Barrutia & Gilsanz, 2013). Knowledge of products and services acquired by consumers is crucial in determining acceptance of offering (Chyh et al., 2017; Ghazali *et al.*, 2017; Suki, 2016; Assaker, Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2011; Tse & Crotts, 2005; Moorman *et al.*, 2004). Essentially, knowledge enhances the consumption level of the present consumers (Ghazali *et al.*, 2017; Maniatis, 2016; Gracia & de Magistris, 2008). It has been recognised as a primary factor of green purchase behaviour (Biswas & Roy, 2015) and a predictor of green purchase behaviour, along with other values as most consumers have insufficient knowledge about green products (Cherian & Jacob, 2012; Lai, 1993). Suki (2016) and Ganapathy et al. (2014) asserted that firms need to provide information that describes the brand and product offering so that consumers can use the knowledge to review and buy the products. Spangenberg *et al.* (2010) claimed that a salesperson can provide further information about green products to consumers, wherein attracted consumers would seek more information about such products. Ghazali *et al.* (2017) emphasised that the level of knowledge among consumers relies on the intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics of the products. If consumers are able to see the intrinsic aspects of the products, such as function and quality, they would have high product knowledge, while low product knowledge is reflective of extrinsic traits of the products, such as brand and price. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis:

H4c: There is a significantly positive relationship between product knowledge and consumer green purchase behaviour.

Health Consciousness

Health consciousness is the act of behaviour by consumers based on health action (Schifferstein & Oude Ophuis, 1998). According to Xie *et al.* (2015), the benefits of health served as the factor that led to organic consumption among consumers. Consumers with high level of health consciousness would choose products that are safe for their skin and body (Johri & Sahasakmontri, 1998), mainly because healthy lifestyle is their priority in securing their prosperity or position (Newsom *et al.*, 2005). Consumers who pay attention to health are responsible for their personal care products (Kalita, 2014; Kim and Chung, 2011; Essoussi & Zahaf, 2008; Mueller, 2006;). Spangler *et al.* (2012) depicted that use of organic products can diminish the exposure towards residue of pesticides and antibiotic-resistant bacteria that can be deleterious to one's health. Similarly, Liobikienė and Bernatoniė (2017) asserted that ingredients are among the most crucial factor of product attributes in selecting personal care products, while Kim and Seock (2009) found that consumers with high level of health consciousness usually purchase natural cosmetics. Thus, the following is hypothesised:

Hypothesis:

H5c: There is a significantly positive relationship between health consciousness and consumer green purchase behaviour.

The Mediating Role of Brand Love

Brand love is defined as the emotional bonding and passion towards a specific brand from consumers (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Past scholars assumed that brand love is a crucial mediator for the relationships of consumers with brand, attitude, and intention (Fantini *et al.*, 2011).

Brand love may be affected by product characteristics and brand, such as quality (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Past studies have reported that perceived quality is a predictor for brand love (Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014). Consumers who perceive price in a positive view are connected to brand and become keen to suggest the products to others (De Matos and Rossi, 2008; McKee *et al.*, 2006). Past studies indicated that brand love resulted in the willingness of consumers to pay premium price (Albert *et al.*, 2013; Batra *et al.*, 2012). When consumers prefer a certain brand, that brand has a special place in their heart, thus creating a unique relationship that leads consumers to spend a higher price for the brand (Bairrada, Coelho, & Lizanets, 2018; Ahuvia *et al.*, 2009). It was found that consumers selected brand based on their members of reference or group that aspires them in a particular field (Karjaluo, Munnukka, & Kiuru, 2016; Huber *et al.*, 2015; Park *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1a and H1b: Brand love mediates the relationship between perceived quality and green purchase behaviour.

H2a and H2b: Brand love mediates the relationship between perceived price and green purchase behaviour.

H3a and H3b: Brand love mediates the relationship between peer influence and green purchase behaviour.

Conceptual Framework

Only a handful of studies have described green purchase behaviour on organic cosmetic. In order to explore the factors of green purchase behaviour on organic cosmetics, this study had adopted new insights from the TCV initiated by Sheth *et al.*, (1991) by incorporating three new constructs, namely perceived price and quality, peer influence, product knowledge, and brand love. Brand love served as the mediating factor in this study to assess green purchase behaviour. Figure 1 illustrates the new conceptual framework derived from the reviewed literature.

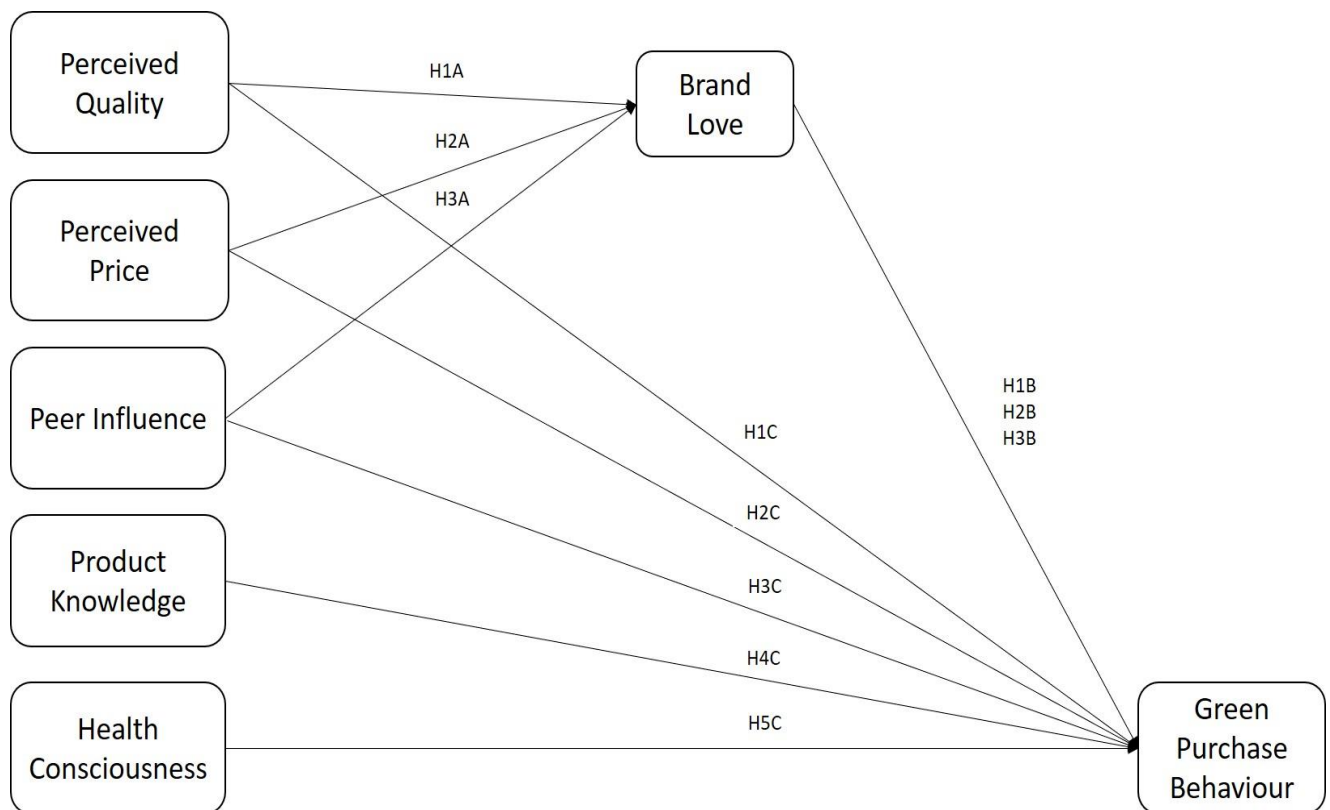


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Mediating Role of Brand Love in Predicting Green Purchase Behaviour towards Organic Cosmetics

Research Implications

The study of green purchase behaviour in Malaysia still limited, unlike studies pertaining to green food (Matic & Puh, 2016) although cosmetic usage in the Asian region has attracted green cosmetics consumers. Inevitably, more studies are required to explore this area of organic cosmetics. This study of green purchase behaviour has focused on organic cosmetics using the new perspectives of

TCV, which turned Functional Value, Conditional Value, Social Value, Emotional Value, and Epistemic Value into perceived quality, perceived price, peer influence, knowledge, health consciousness, and brand love to serve as mediator. This study may help future researchers to understand more about the theory in the specific research context. The study outcomes may be used to generalise the behaviour of organic cosmetics displayed by consumer as this study covered most parts in Malaysia. The mediator effect of brand love has been popular recently in the marketing segment, in which prior studies have bridged the gap between brand and consumer behaviour. This mediator serves as a catalyst to connect perceived quality, perceived price, and peer influence with green purchase behaviour. The results may facilitate marketers and industry players to market organic cosmetics accordingly to consumer behaviour by complying with the government regulatory. Input about consumer behaviour in Malaysia is useful for the health ministry to monitor consumer behaviour, while aiding the industry players to align with the objective outlined by the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency under the Ministry of Health to ensure that the substances incorporated in the cosmetics are effective, safe, and quality approved - ultimately, ensuring the approval and safe use of the cosmetics products.

Conclusion and Future Research

Overall, this study has discussed the TCV developed by Sheth et al. (1991). This theory was applied to better comprehend the factors that influence green purchase behaviour within the context of organic cosmetics. Some factors highlighted by prior studies are perceived price, perceived quality, peer influence, product knowledge, and health consciousness. In this study, brand love has been introduced as the mediator that acts as a catalyst to green purchase behaviour. The theme of this study was selected as the reference on these variables is still limited in number, particularly in light of green purchase behaviour and organic cosmetics. The study outcomes are beneficial to both green marketers and green consumers. Future research endeavours may embed culture as a significant factor upon considering varying cultures (Paço, Shiel, & Alves, 2019). This is in line with the Malaysian context, which is diverse in its cultural aspect, thus serving as an integral factor of green purchase behaviour that could differ across the country.

Research Contribution

This study focuses on the organic cosmetics among the consumers by use Theory of Consumer Values (TCV) which this theory is proven to be winner in describing various range of consumer choice behaviour and used in many studies. In this study, based on the attributes in five main consumption values, new perspective of the existing constructs has been introduced. The new constructs of consumption values were introduced specifically based on research setting of this study about the factors affecting green purchase behaviour towards organic cosmetics.

Other than that, there is modification of the theory by having a value as mediator, which is brand love that derived from emotional value. This mediator gave contribution in terms of literature that brand love acted as a catalyst in bridging perceived quality, perceived price, peer influence, knowledge with green purchase behaviour. This brand love has been popular in marketing especially in the context of word of mouth and past researcher connected the brand with behaviour of consumer. Therefore, this finding will help future researchers to study brand love in other context of consumer in green purchase behaviour.

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