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DETERMINANTS OF GREEN PRODUCT PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN MALAYSIA: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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Abstract:

Green product purchasing among young adults in Malaysia has become increasingly important in supporting sustainable consumption practices. Despite increasing interest in green consumption, limited studies integrate marketing-related factors with psychological determinants within the Malaysian youth context. This conceptual paper aims to identify the key determinants influencing green product purchase behaviour among young adults in Malaysia. Specifically, the study focuses on the effects of eco-labels, attitude, environmental consciousness, green advertising, and green perceived quality on green product purchase behaviour. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the proposed framework explains how these factors shape young adults' purchasing decisions toward green products. This paper synthesises existing literature and develops a conceptual model to guide future empirical research. It is anticipated that findings from subsequent empirical studies will provide valuable insights for marketers and policymakers in designing effective strategies to promote sustainable consumption among young adults in Malaysia.

DOI:10.35631/AIJBES.827023 **Keyword:**

Attitude, Environmental Consciousness, Eco-label, Green Product Purchase Behaviour, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)



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Introduction

Growing environmental awareness, together with increasingly stringent regulatory requirements, has contributed to a rise in global demand for green products (Zhang et al., 2023). Green products are typically developed to minimise environmental harm by promoting efficient resource use and reducing waste across the product life cycle (Ncube et al., 2023). In recent years, food products carrying health-related claims, particularly organic labels, have received increasing attention, as consumers perceive these products to offer added value and to align with growing demand for healthier and more natural dietary options (Yasin et al., 2025). As environmental challenges become more visible, consumers have become more attentive to the environmental consequences of their consumption behaviour. In response, many consumers seek to address these concerns through more informed purchasing decisions, which has encouraged greater interest in eco-friendly products. Young adults, particularly those in urban and educated segments, represent a critical demographic in this transition toward sustainable food consumption, given their higher exposure to sustainability discourse and evolving lifestyle preferences (Tuan Shahidil Akma et al., 2025).

Green consumption is generally associated with environmentally responsible purchasing behaviour, where consumers consider the environmental effects of product use and disposal (Khan et al., 2024). Environmentally conscious consumers play an important role in supporting sustainable development, as green consumption contributes to environmental protection as well as social and economic well-being (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). As awareness of environmental degradation grows, consumers who are concerned about sustainability are more likely to adopt proactive behaviours, including the purchase of eco-friendly products (Konuk et al., 2015).

In Malaysia, environmental issues such as waste management and climate change have drawn attention to sustainable consumption, particularly among young adults from Generation Z and the Millennial cohort. These groups are influential in shaping consumption trends due to their purchasing power and social awareness. However, although young adults often express concern for environmental issues, this concern does not always translate into actual green purchasing behaviour (Hlaba & Shava, 2025).

Previous studies indicate that while willingness to purchase green products has increased, actual adoption remains inconsistent. This situation creates opportunities for marketers to

strengthen the appeal of eco-friendly products by improving perceived benefits and increasing market visibility. Nguyen et al. (2016) reported that most consumers believe individuals share responsibility for adopting environmentally friendly behaviours, while many also expect producers to act responsibly. Although some studies show that green practices can enhance organisational performance (Agyabeng et al., 2020; Saeed et al., 2018), others suggest that the benefits of green entrepreneurship are not always clear (Kreiser et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2000).

These mixed findings highlight the importance of consumer participation in addressing environmental challenges through conscious purchasing decisions (Ogiemwonyi et al., 2020). Consumers who are environmentally concerned tend to be more aware of the environmental and quality implications of their purchases, although their sensitivity to these factors varies (Ogiemwonyi & Harun, 2020). Evidence from developed countries shows that many consumers prefer sustainable brands, and a significant proportion are willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly products (Chen et al., 2018). Increasing environmental awareness has therefore encouraged researchers to examine how environmental concern and consciousness influence green purchase behaviour (Ogiemwonyi et al., 2023).

Despite growing interest in green consumption, gaps remain in understanding how environmental consciousness and concern influence consumer behaviour, particularly in emerging economies. This issue is especially relevant in Malaysia, where green initiatives are expanding but consumer acceptance of green products remains relatively low. However, existing studies remain fragmented and fail to provide an integrated explanation of green purchase behaviour among young adults in emerging economies. Addressing this gap is essential for promoting sustainable consumption in the Malaysian context.

Literature Review

Definition of Green Product

A green product can be defined as a product whose design, production processes, attributes, and marketing strategies incorporate recyclable, renewable, non-toxic, or biodegradable resources, thereby minimising environmental harm and reducing toxic impacts throughout its entire life cycle (Liu & Wu, 2009). The concept of “green” emerged within the marketing discipline in the late 1980s and early 1990s, coinciding with heightened consumer environmental awareness (Tseng & Hung, 2013). Although scholarly interest in green products has expanded significantly over recent decades, the field remains conceptually fragmented, as there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes a green product (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibañez, 2006; Durif et al., 2010; Ritter et al., 2015).

Empirical evidence supports this inconsistency, as Durif et al. (2010) found substantial divergence in interpretations of green products across academic, business, and consumer perspectives. Despite this ambiguity, the notion of “green” is widely recognised as an evocative and influential concept (Air Quality Sciences, Inc., 2010). Several scholars have attempted to clarify the term; for instance, Peattie (1995) defines a green product as one that demonstrates significantly improved environmental and social performance during production, usage, and disposal compared to conventional alternatives, highlighting the importance of a life-cycle perspective. Emphasises resource efficiency, reduced environmental risk, and waste prevention

at the product conception stage, underscoring the critical role of eco-design in green product development (Sousa & Wallace, 2006).

Theoretical Foundation

This study extends the Theory of Planned Behaviour by incorporating marketing-related constructs such as eco-label and green advertising, which are often overlooked in traditional TPB applications. TPB has been widely applied in the context of green and sustainable consumption to explain environmentally responsible purchasing decisions, as it captures both internal evaluations and external constraints affecting consumer behaviour (Yadav & Pathak, 2016; Joshi & Rahman, 2015).

Drawing on TPB and prior green consumption research, the framework positions green product buying decision as the dependent variable and identifies five key antecedents: eco-label, attitude toward green products, environmental consciousness, green advertising, and green perceived quality. Attitude reflects individuals' overall evaluation of purchasing green products and is conceptually aligned with the attitudinal component of TPB. Environmental consciousness represents consumers' awareness of environmental issues and their concern for ecological protection, which has been shown to strengthen pro-environmental attitudes and purchasing behaviour. Green perceived quality reflects consumers' evaluation of the environmental and functional superiority of green products, influencing confidence and willingness to purchase. TPB remains relevant but benefits from adaptation to cultural, social, and environmental contexts, particularly in developing countries like Malaysia, where green product adoption is still emerging. By integrating these extended constructs, this study aligns with the evolving literature and aims to provide a more holistic understanding of Malaysian consumers' intentions toward sustainable consumption (Azli et al., 2025).

Green Product Purchase Behaviour

Green product purchase behaviour refers to consumers' actual decisions to purchase products that are designed to reduce negative environmental and social impacts arising from consumption (Lai & Cheng, 2016). Conscious consumers often view their purchasing choices as a practical way to support environmental protection and sustainable development. Previous studies suggest that the presence of sustainable attributes in products can enhance consumer satisfaction and reinforce favourable evaluations of green products (Hassan et al., 2022). In this regard, green purchase behaviour is commonly understood as the behavioural outcome of prior intentions and attitudes, reflecting consumers' willingness to commit to environmentally responsible consumption (Joshi & Rahman, 2015).

However, empirical research consistently reports a gap between consumers' stated environmental concern and their actual purchasing behaviour. Although many consumers express strong concern for environmental issues, this concern is not always reflected in higher levels of green product purchases (Liu et al., 2012). This discrepancy indicates that positive attitudes alone may be insufficient to generate consistent green purchasing behaviour. Limited awareness of the environmental consequences associated with specific products has been identified as one factor that constrains consumers' ability to translate concern into action (Liu et al., 2012).

Overall, these findings suggest that green product purchase behaviour is shaped by more than environmental concern or favourable attitudes. A clearer understanding of the factors that enable consumers to move from concern to actual purchasing decisions remains necessary, particularly in contexts where green consumption is still evolving.

Eco-label and Purchase Behaviour for Green Product

Eco-labels function as informational cues that signal a product's environmental performance and compliance with recognised sustainability standards (Chekima et al., 2015). By reducing information asymmetry, eco-labels enable consumers to evaluate the environmental implications of products more efficiently, thereby facilitating informed purchasing decisions. Prior research suggests that access to credible environmental information enhances consumers' understanding of both the individual and collective benefits associated with green consumption (Tseng & Hung, 2013).

In the Malaysian context, eco-labels have gained increasing relevance as environmental awareness among consumers continues to grow. Empirical evidence indicates that environmentally concerned consumers actively rely on eco-labels when evaluating green products and services, treating such labels as a key criterion in purchase decisions (Taufique et al., 2019). As Malaysia was among the first Asian countries to systematically assess consumer perceptions of eco-labelling, the role of eco-labels remains especially salient in shaping green purchasing behaviour. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H₁: Eco-labels are positively associated with green product purchase behaviour among young adults.

Attitude and Purchase Behaviour for Green Products

Attitude reflects an individual's overall evaluation of a behaviour and is widely recognised as a core predictor of decision-making (Ajzen, 2001). In the context of green consumption, favourable attitudes toward environmentally friendly products are expected to encourage purchasing behaviour. However, prior studies suggest that the relationship between attitude and green purchasing is not always straightforward, as factors such as price sensitivity, limited availability, and inconsistent information may weaken the translation of positive attitudes into actual purchases (Connell, 2010; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

Empirical findings on the attitude-behaviour relationship in green consumption remain mixed. While several studies report a positive association between favourable attitudes and green purchase intentions (Khaola et al., 2014; Maichum, 2016), others argue that attitudinal factors alone do not sufficiently explain actual purchasing behaviour (Bamberg, 2003; Hines et al., 1987; Tanner, 1999). These inconsistencies suggest that although attitude remains an important determinant, its influence on green purchase behaviour requires further empirical clarification, particularly among younger consumer groups. Despite mixed findings in prior studies, this study re-examines the role of attitude in the Malaysian context proposes the following hypothesis:

H₂: Attitude toward green products is positively associated with green product purchase behaviour among young adults.

Environmental Consciousness and Purchase Behaviour for Green Products

Environmental consciousness refers to an individual's awareness of environmental problems and the perceived importance of adopting environmentally responsible behaviours to mitigate such issues (Liang et al., 2024). Consumers with higher levels of environmental consciousness are generally more sensitive to the environmental consequences of their consumption and are more willing to adjust their purchasing patterns to minimise harm.

Previous studies indicate that environmental consciousness is closely linked to pro-environmental attitudes and supportive consumption behaviours, particularly among younger consumers who demonstrate increasing concern for sustainability issues (Law et al., 2017). As environmental consciousness strengthens, consumers are more likely to perceive green purchasing as a meaningful contribution to environmental protection, thereby increasing their likelihood of selecting eco-friendly products. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: Environmental consciousness is positively associated with green product purchase behaviour among young adults.

Green Advertising and Purchase Behaviour for Green Products

Fowler & Close (2012) defined green advertising as a type of advertising that explicitly or implicitly promotes an awareness of environmental issues and/or suggests behaviours useful in minimizing or correcting these environmental issues. Green advertisement represents an efficient means to influence consumers' purchasing behaviour that will strongly encourage consumers to buy products that are eco-friendly to our environment. Such advertising serves not only as an informational tool but also as a means of shaping brand perceptions and reinforcing environmental positioning (Keller, 2009). Prior research suggests that green advertising can attract consumer attention more effectively by associating products with environmental responsibility and sustainability values (Chekima et al., 2015).

However, consumers do not respond to green advertising uniformly. In addition to exposure, consumers evaluate the credibility and authenticity of environmental claims, which influences their trust in the advertised brand (Phau & Ong, 2007). Empirical evidence indicates that credible green advertising can positively affect attitudes and purchase intentions toward environmentally friendly products, provided that the claims are perceived as truthful and verifiable (Ahmad et al., 2010; Zhu, 2012). Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis: H₄: Green advertising is positively associated with green product purchase behaviour among young adults.

Green Perceived Quality and Purchase Behaviour for Green Products

Green perceived quality refers to consumers' overall judgement of a product's environmental excellence relative to alternatives (Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived quality has long been recognised as a critical determinant of purchase behaviour, particularly in situations where consumers lack prior experience with a product (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In green consumption contexts, perceived quality encompasses not only functional performance but also environmental credibility and trustworthiness.

When consumers perceive green products as high in quality, they are more likely to develop trust in the brand, which in turn strengthens purchase intentions and loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Previous studies suggest that perceived quality plays a central role in reducing uncertainty and encouraging trial of green products, especially when environmental attributes are difficult to evaluate directly (Lowry et al., 2008). Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H₅: Green perceived quality is positively associated with green product purchase behaviour among young adults.

Conceptual Framework

Based on an extensive review of the literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework to explain green product purchase behaviour among young adults. The framework positions green product buying decision as the dependent variable and identifies five key antecedents: eco-label, attitude toward green products, environmental consciousness, green advertising, and green perceived quality. These variables are grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior and prior research on green consumption, which suggests that purchasing decisions are shaped by a combination of cognitive evaluations, environmental awareness, and marketing-related cues. Eco-labels are included as an informational factor that signals a product's environmental performance and assists consumers in making informed choices. Attitude toward green products reflects individuals' overall evaluation of environmentally friendly consumption, while environmental consciousness captures consumers' awareness of environmental issues and their concern for ecological protection. Green advertising represents firms' efforts to communicate environmental value and influence consumer perceptions, whereas green perceived quality reflects consumers' overall assessment of the environmental and functional superiority of green products.

The framework proposes direct relationships between each independent variable and green product buying decision, represented by five hypotheses (H1–H5). Specifically, eco-label (H1), attitude (H2), environmental consciousness (H3), green advertising (H4), and green perceived quality (H5) are hypothesised to have positive effects on young adults' green product purchase decisions. By integrating these determinants within a single framework, the model provides a comprehensive explanation of green purchasing behaviour and offers a structured basis for future empirical investigation. Based on the literature, the following framework has been developed.

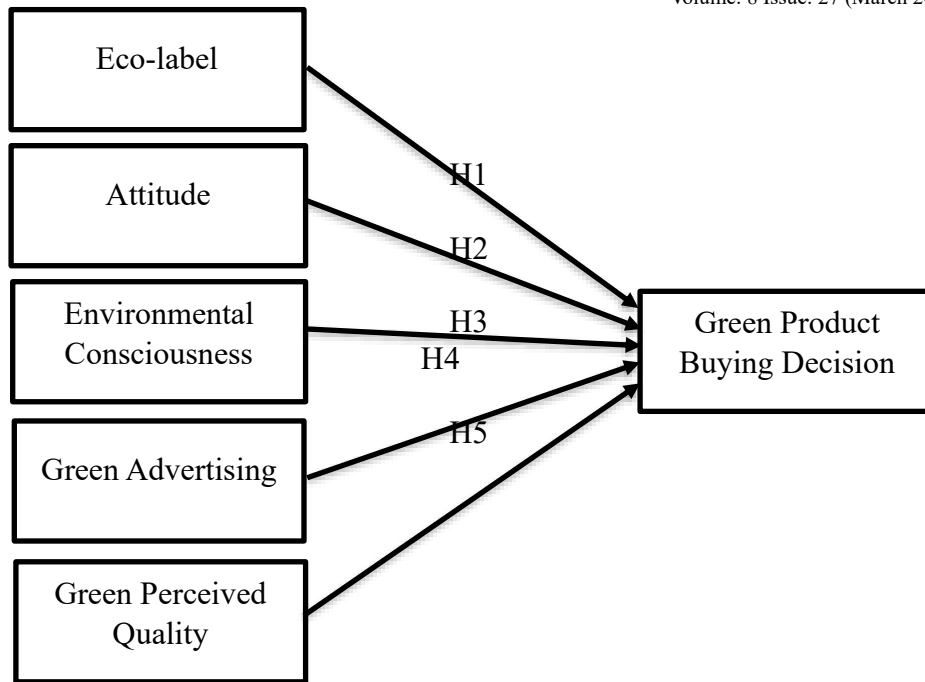


Figure 1: Research Framework

Conclusion

This study contributes by extending TPB into a more context-specific model for emerging economies. It proposes that eco-labels, environmental consciousness, green advertising, and green perceived quality influence purchasing decisions, primarily through the formation of positive attitudes toward green products. By incorporating both individual and marketing-related factors, the study extends TPB to better explain green consumption in a developing country context. Although young adults often express environmental concern, this concern does not always lead to consistent green purchasing behaviour. The proposed framework highlights the importance of credible product information, perceived quality, and effective communication in strengthening purchase decisions. The paper contributes by offering a structured model tailored to the Malaysian context and by identifying key variables for future empirical testing. Further quantitative research is needed to validate the proposed relationships and provide clearer guidance for promoting sustainable consumption among young consumers.

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