



ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF BUSINESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND SMES
(AIJBES)

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

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Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 15.01.2026

Revised date: 12.02.2026

Accepted date: 26.03.2026

Published date: 31.03.2026

To cite this document:

Sakri, S. K. M., Yasin, N. H. M., & Ab Rashid, A. F. (2026). Determinants Of Green Cosmetic Purchase Behaviour Among Young Adults in Malaysia: A Conceptual Paper. *Advanced International Journal of Business Entrepreneurship and SMEs*, 8 (27), 819-825.

Abstract:

Green cosmetic purchase behaviour among young adults in Malaysia represents a vital aspect of sustainable consumption within the expanding beauty and personal care sector. Despite growing awareness and positive attitudes toward natural and organic cosmetics, empirical evidence reveals a persistent intention-behaviour gap, where actual purchases of green cosmetics remain limited among this demographic. This conceptual paper addresses this gap by developing an extended Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) framework that integrates attitude toward green cosmetics, green self-identity, ethical concern (particularly regarding animal welfare), perceived consumer effectiveness, and social media influencer exposure as key determinants of green cosmetic purchase behaviour. The framework explicitly maps these constructs to TPB components: attitude as the core attitudinal factor, perceived consumer effectiveness to perceived behavioural control, social media influencer exposure as a digital form of subjective norm, and green self-identity with ethical concern as internal moral-identity extensions. By synthesising prior empirical studies from green consumption and cosmetics literature, the paper proposes five testable hypotheses suitable for validation through future cross-sectional surveys of Malaysian young adults. Theoretically, this study contributes by extending TPB through novel integration of moral-identity and digital influence factors in an underexplored Malaysian context. Practically, it offers actionable insights for marketers and policymakers

to bridge the attitude-behaviour gap and promote sustainable cosmetic consumption patterns.

DOI:10.35631/AJBES.827052 **Keyword:**

Attitude, Ethical Concern, Green Cosmetic Purchase Behaviour, Green Self-Identity, Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, Social Media Influencer Exposure, Theory of Planned Behaviour



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Introduction

Growing concerns about climate change, environmental degradation, and resource depletion have driven global demand for sustainable consumption, including green cosmetics that minimise harm to human health, animals, and the environment through natural ingredients, reduced chemical use, eco-friendly packaging, and ethical practices such as cruelty-free standards. Young adults worldwide increasingly view green cosmetics as aligned with their health, image, and sustainability values, serving as expressions of environmental responsibility. In Malaysia's expanding beauty sector, young adults constitute a key segment due to high usage and digital engagement. Yet, they exhibit positive attitudes toward green cosmetics, alongside limited actual purchases, influenced by price, availability, doubts about performance, and concerns about greenwashing—manifesting the well-documented intention-behaviour gap. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) effectively explains such green purchase intentions through attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, with extensions that incorporate self-identity, ethical concern, and perceived consumer effectiveness, capturing moral motivations in the cosmetics context.

Social media influencers further shape preferences by providing information, social proof, and lifestyle cues, enhancing awareness and intentions for ethical products among youth. However, no comprehensive framework examines the joint roles of green self-identity, ethical concern, perceived consumer effectiveness, and social media influencer exposure within TPB to explain Malaysian young adults' green cosmetic purchase behaviour, particularly addressing the intention-behaviour gap in this specific context.

This conceptual paper develops an extended TPB framework comprising five determinants: attitude toward green cosmetics, green self-identity, ethical concern, perceived consumer effectiveness, and exposure to social media influencers. Subsequent sections review relevant literature, develop hypotheses, present the framework, and discuss implications.

Literature Review

Green Cosmetic Purchase Behaviour

Green cosmetics emphasise natural ingredients, reduced chemicals, sustainable packaging, and cruelty-free production to benefit personal health and the environment. While associated with aspirational lifestyles among youth, barriers like price and scepticism limit consistent adoption, particularly in Malaysia, where attitudes exceed behaviour.

Theory of Planned Behaviour and Extensions

TPB links intention to behaviour via attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Extensions for green cosmetics include moral factors like self-identity and ethical concern, plus digital influences like social media exposure, which function as modern normative pressures. This framework positions attitude centrally, perceived consumer effectiveness as control, influencer exposure as digital norms, and identity/ethics as moral extensions.

Hypotheses Development

Attitude Toward Green Cosmetics

Positive evaluations of green cosmetics' safety and benefits of green cosmetics drive purchase behaviour among youth.

H1: Attitude positively affects green cosmetic purchase behaviour.

Green Self-Identity

Positive evaluations of green cosmetics' safety and benefits drive purchase behaviour among youth.

H2: Green self-identity positively affects purchase behaviour.

Ethical Concern

Concerns over animal testing motivate cruelty-free choices, especially among youth expressing identity through ethics.

H3: Ethical concern positively affects purchase behaviour.

Perceived Consumer Effectiveness

Belief in personal impact via purchases motivates green choices.

H4: Perceived consumer effectiveness positively affects purchase behaviour.

Social Media Influencer Exposure

Digital proof shapes youth choices.

H5: Influencer exposure positively affects purchase behaviour.

Integrated Framework

Based on the literature, this paper proposes a conceptual framework in which attitude toward green cosmetics, green self-identity, ethical concern, perceived consumer effectiveness and social media influencer exposure are posited as key determinants of green cosmetic purchase behaviour among young adults in Malaysia. Within this framework, attitude represents the core TPB attitudinal component, perceived consumer effectiveness reflects perceived behavioural control, social media influencer exposure is conceptualised as a digital form of subjective norm and green self-identity, and ethical concern operate as internal moral drivers that extend TPB.

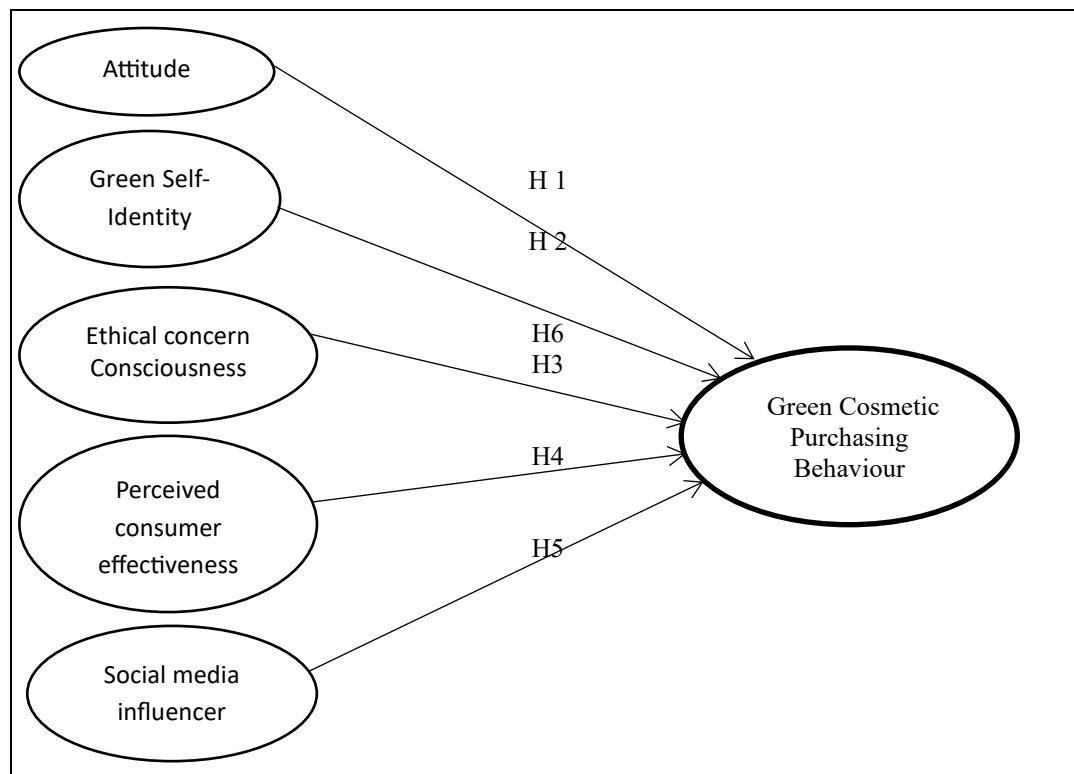


Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework Extending the Theory of Planned Behavior for Green Cosmetic Purchase Behaviour Among Malaysian Young Adults.

Conclusion

The proposed framework contributes to the theoretical development of TPB-based models in sustainable consumption by integrating moral–identity constructs and digital social influence into the explanation of green cosmetic purchase behaviour. By focusing on green self-identity, ethical concern, perceived consumer effectiveness and social media influencer exposure alongside attitude, the framework addresses the intention–behaviour gap that characterises young adults’ green cosmetic choices in Malaysia. Practically, the framework suggests that marketers and policymakers seeking to foster sustainable cosmetic consumption should not

only promote favourable evaluations of green cosmetics but also strengthen consumers' perceived effectiveness, leverage credible influencers and appeal to ethical and identity-based motivations. Future empirical research can test the proposed hypotheses through cross-sectional surveys among Malaysian young adults and refine the model across different demographic and product segments.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to their main supervisor, Dr. Nurul Hafizah binti Mohd Yasin, and co-supervisor, Dr. Ahmad Faezi Ab Rashid, for their exceptional mentorship, intellectual guidance and unwavering encouragement throughout this research. The authors also extend their sincere appreciation to the Postgraduate Office for its administrative support and for the sponsorship provided through the National Postgraduate Conference 2026, which offered a valuable platform for disseminating this work and engaging in academic dialogue.

Funding Statement: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors. The authors acknowledge support from the National Postgraduate Conference 2026 sponsorship for presentation and dissemination of this conceptual work.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. All authors have contributed to this work and approved the final version of the manuscript for submission to the Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (AIJBES).

Ethics Statement: This paper is conceptual in nature and does not involve empirical data collection, human participants or animal subjects. No ethical approval was required.

Author Contribution Statement: All authors contributed significantly to the development of this manuscript. Siti Khatijah Mohamad Sakri handled the literature review, framework development, and original draft writing. Nurul Hafizah Mohd Yasin was responsible for the conceptualization, supervision, methodology review, and editing of the study. Ahmad Faezi Ab Rashid contributed to theoretical framework validation, critical review, and final approval of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.

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