

# DOES GREEN MARKETING WORKS WITH CONSUMERS?

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## **Abstract:**

Green and going green is a confused concept in the business sector since, many are going by alternative names such as sustainable marketing, environmental marketing, Eco marketing, organic marketing, etc. Green marketing, also otherwise identified as environmental marketing and sustainable marketing, refers to an organization's efforts at scheming, stimulating, valuing and allocating products that will not damage the environment. Green marketing is essentially a way to brand marketing message in order to capture more of the market by appealing to people's desire to choose products and services that are better for the environment. It is hypothesized in this research that through green marketing it is possible for a company to enhance their brand value on their product to the customers, but may have less chance to influence on consumer purchasing behavior. This study was conducted among 389 customers in Kaula-Lumpur and Penang area Malaysia. The study applied statistical tools like correlation and regression to arrive at the findings. The findings indicate that the companies green marketing campaigns well correlated with brand perception of and buying behavior of consumers. The study provides insight into the dynamic nature of consumer buying behavior.

## **Key Terms:**

Green, Green Marketing, Brand, Brand Perception, Buying Behavior, Retail shops

## **1. Introduction**

The green awareness began in between of the 1960s and early 1970s with increasing concern about the negative impact of consumption pattern, impact of economic and population growth on the environment (Cohen, 2001). But, a serious concern of green marketing appeared in the late 1980s with a rapid increase in the consumer awareness for greener products. The increasing awareness in environment friendly products, their willingness to pay for these products, increased concern for these products which encouraged companies to show interest in the green marketing (Peattie and Crane, 2005). Green marketing has been an important academic research topic for at least three decades (Kassarjian, 1971; Kinnear et al., 1974; Coddington, 1993; Meffert Kirchgeorg, 1993; Hopfenbeck, 1993; Ottman, 1994; Peattie, 1995; Polonsky and Mintu-Wimsatt, 1995; Schlegelmilch et al., 1996; Bigne', 1997; Fuller, 1999; Kalafatis et al., 1999; Calomarde, 2000; Fraj and Martí'nez, 2002).

The misconception of green marketing by majority of people makes its definition very critical, yet defining green marketing is not a simple task. Indeed the terminologies and definitions used in this area are varied. The terminologies include; green marketing, Environmental marketing and ecological marketing (Polonsky, 1994). Therefore, there is no universally accepted terminology and definition of green marketing up to today. For the purpose of this paper the term green marketing will be used the concept of 'green marketing' is the business practice that considers consumers concerns with regards to the preservation and conservation of the natural environment (Coddington, 1993). Green Marketing is defined by Peattie (1995) as 'the holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the requirements of customers and society in a profitable and sustainable way'. Green marketing is the planning, development and promotion of products or services that satisfy the needs of consumers in quality, output, accessible prices and service, without however a negative effect on the environment with regard to the use of raw material, the consumption of energy etc. (Davis, 1991; Kangis, 1992; Meffet and Kirchgeorg, 1994; Jain and Kaur, 2004; Peattie and Grane, 2006; Grant, 2008; Pride and Ferrell, 2008). Green marketing that has been previously and primarily focused on the ecological context has been shifted to more sustainability issues in the marketing efforts and main focus now is in socio-economic and environmental context.

"Green or Environmental Marketing consists of all activities de-signed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment" (Polonsky, 1994). Green marketing is the marketing that includes environmental issues in the marketing efforts. The basic idea is that customers are provided with information on the environmental effect of the products and they can and use this information while deciding which product to purchase. Those aspects will in turn make companies more inclined to produce products that are better from an environmental point of view (Rex & Baumann, 2007)

Green marketing mainly focuses on four issues. These issues are: first, the importance of green marketing; second, the impact of green marketing on firms' competitiveness and performance; third, recognition by consumers; and fourth, improving effectiveness of green marketing. During 1990s, the concern for environment increased and resulted in increasing challenges for the companies (Johri and Sahasakmontri, 1998).

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Green Market**

Green market is identified as a part of market segments based on the 'greenness' of the consumer (Charter et al., 2002; Simintiras et al., 1994). Dan Butler (2010) in this context indicates that "green tailing" and "sustainability" are going to be major retail trends across the country even in today's challenging economic times. It's still a relatively new frontier in the field of in the world of retail, but those green initiatives are here to stay... shifted a lot of thinking. Many retailers are taking proactive steps themselves and are offering shoppers small discounts on their bill if they don't opt for plastic shopping bags are checked out. Food basics, for example is one of the growing number of retailers that are encouraging the use of reusable bags by charging consumers for plastic bags. In January of 2008 Whole Force became the first supermarket in the US to eliminate the use of disposable plastic grocery bags in their stores, and offer five to ten cents back for each reusable bag the consumer uses. Another developing trend on this issue is the retailers who are now using biodegradable bags. In Canada, Loblaw recently announced a five cent charge for plastic shopping bags in its stores starting April 22 (2008) with a plan to divert one billion plastic bags from land fields each year. The companies will also re-donating some the funds obtained from the plastic bag charges to wwf Canada (Progressive Grocer 2008).

Ben Berry (2009) indicates that consumers and retailers are becoming increasingly conscious of where and how products are produced to the amount of energy resource and materials consumed during production and distribution, to the energy efficiency of retail outlets in which the good are sold. Increasingly, this means considering the environmental impact of the entire life cycle of the products. With the industry looking at the overall picture of sustainability and; greening; all aspects of their business, the three factors of responsibility are increasingly involved, environmental, economic and social. From a retail perspective sustainable strategy encompass a range of activities such as waste reduction and management, energy and water conservation, pollution prevention and purchasing. Companies embracing sustainability are now not only driven by government and consumer pressure, but recognize the inherent business opportunities and cost benefits available with sustainability in developing new products and services. To this effect, all members of the retail food chain are being impacted by the green movement and are taking proactive measures towards sustainability.

## **2.2. Green Brand and Consumer Buying Behavior**

### **2.1.1. Brand**

A brand is defined as “a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Kotler & Keller, 2009). A brand offers differentiation to customers on the sources of products, and act as a protective medium to distinguish products from competitors that appear to be identical (Low & Charles, 2000). Over the years, knowledge on the power of brands in influencing consumer purchase decision has sparked great interest to many marketing researchers (Francisco, Teodoro, Francisca, & Paloma, 2006). The reasons behind our brand is intangible and it provides the source of competitive advantage for a firm (Ghodeswar, 2008; Rajagopal, 2008). Green brand is defined as “brand which offers a significant eco-advantage over the incumbents and able to attract consumer who set a high priority to be green in their purchase” (Grant, 2008, p. 25). A green brand consists of a set of attributes and benefits that associated with reduced adverse environment impact and able to create a positive impression to consumers on raising their environmental concern (Hartmann & Ibáñez, 2006).

### **2.1.2. Green marketing influence**

Green marketing has been an important academic research topic since it came (Coddinton, 1993; Fuller; 1999; Ottman, 1994). The term ‘Green Marketing’ although is widely popular these days but yet lacks single accepted definition. In general, green marketing is concerned with all the activities of an organization that may have an influence on the environment, both in the short- and the long-term. Such activities not only include the development of physical characteristics of products that do not harm the natural environment, but also the processes, promotions, and related claims (Polonsky, 1995). The green marketing practices offer an opportunity to engage people and promote green lifestyles. From the other side there is also an opportunity to innovate in providing business solutions and achieve profit targets and at the same time build the customer trust on your company. Further describes the green objectives of the business you can change as your competitors are doing ‘change the way they see the world’ Grant, (2007).

A green brand identity is defined by a specific set of brand attributes and benefits related to the reduced environmental impact of the brand and its perception as being environmentally sound. A well-implemented green brand identity should provide benefits to environmentally conscious consumers. While there are some studies about the perceived value of environmentally sound product attributes (Roozen and De Pelsmacker, 1998), the role of emotional benefits in the case of green brands is still largely unassessed. The success of a brand strategy which positions the product exclusively by its functional attributes may be limited by the fact that the reduction of a product’s environmental impact

generally does not deliver individual benefits to its buyer. Therefore, the perceived customer benefit may be insufficient as a motivating factor for a brand purchase (Belz and Dyllik, 1996). Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) define brand positioning as the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience. Positioning a brand as a “green brand” entails an active communication and differentiation of the brand from its competitors through its environmentally sound attributes. Ecologically sustainable products will not be commercially successful if green brand attributes are not effectively communicated (Pickett et al., 1995). Coddington (1993) and Meffert and Kirchgeorg (1993) suggest that green positioning as an essential factor in the success of green branding strategies.

### **2.1.3. Brand perception**

Brand perception is defined as “consumers’ ability to identify the brand under different condition defined by their brand recognition or recall performance” (Wonglorsachon & Sathainrapabayut, 2008, p. 387). Brand perception gets in touch with consumer either via direct or indirect contact (Foscht, Maloles, Swoboda, Morschett, & Sinha, 2008).

### **2.1.4. Impact of marketing communications**

The impact of marketing communications activity on brand equity/values is receiving significant attention, both as a result of changes to international accounting standards relating to the reporting of the financial value of intangible assets, and as a result of increased focus on the impact of marketing – particularly marketing communication – activity on brand performance (e.g. Eagle and Kitchen, 2000). Feldwick (1996) notes that, prior to the 1990s; the concept of brand image was seen as a vague theory, primarily used when describing advertising objectives rather than converting prospects or making sales. Perceptions changed when brands themselves started to change hands for considerable sums. The difference between the balance sheet valuations and the price paid for companies or brands was attributed to ‘the value of brands’. Brand equity thus became the focus of many debates. It was reported that characteristics of an organization or prominent people within the organization is able to transfer such characteristics to brand perception (Foscht et al., 2008). Grant (2008) mentioned that majority of successful green brands are either based on alternative technology or company that runs on green principles. The reason is the green brand adoption process by consumer involved factual evaluation that span from various aspects.

### **2.1.5. Green Buying Behavior**

Green consumerism or green buying behavior is one of the pro-environmental behavior. It refers to purchasing and consuming products that have minimal impacts on the environment (Mainieri, et al., 1997). There are different terms used interchangeably with green buying behavior (Kim, 2002; Kim and Choi, 2003, 2005) such as pro-environmental purchase behavior (Tilikidou, 2006; Soutar, et al., 1994), environmentally responsible purchase behavior (Follows and Jobber, 2000); and green purchase behavior (Mostafa, 2007; Shamdasani, et al., 1993). Kar, (2010) indicates that the consumer behavior has changed greatly over the last 25 years but it has been evolutionary and the seeds of change have been apparent for generations. Due to the heightened awareness of protecting the natural environment, customers are increasingly considering boycotting high-polluting products and services. In the past, enterprises tended to pursue the goal of maximizing corporate profits with little consideration to environmental concerns (Charter and Polonsky, 1999). However, the innovative green idea was gradually included in the most critical goals of marketing that minimized the damage level to the natural environment, decreased the negative impact of human pollution and created ecological benefits for the entire world (Fisk, 1974). Polonsky (1994) expressed that manufacturers as well as service firms have recently shifted their manufacturing production, service and advertising to address customers’ needs for better environmentally safe products and services (Coddington, 1993).

It has further observed an increase of the ecological conscience of consumers which results in the increased demand for green products, a phenomenon that is well exploited by a great number of enterprises, which start offering green products and services (Vandermerwe and Oliff, 1990; Salzman, 1991; Ottman, 1992; Peattie and Ratnayaka, 1992; Chan, K., 1999). A relevant research has elected that the consumers that are interested in environmental matters take their purchasing decisions with criteria beyond the usual consuming models. Thus, it is observed that they reject excellent technical products because they are conscious of their damaging consequences in the environment due to the productive process or their disposal or because this is a way to show that they disapprove certain activities of their producers, suppliers or investors (Drucker, 1973; Bernstein, 1992; Peattie, 1995; Peattie, 1999). A recent research of the Greek market (2009) about the "green marketing", realized by the Athens Laboratory of Research in Marketing in collaboration with the Center of Sustainability (CSE) proved among others that the overwhelming majority of the consumers (92.8%) has a positive attitude towards the enterprises that are sensitive on environmental matters. This attitude represents mainly women of bigger age, married with children, housewives and pensioner.

D'Souza et al., (2007) indicates that regarding both interest in green products and green certifications, demographics tend to play an important role. Yet, results seem rather inconsistent in profiling the green consumer. For instance, Magnusson et al. (2001) mention that women and young respondents (18-25 years) are particularly positive toward organic products. A decade earlier, Byrne et al. (1990) had also found that young females with a high school degree and above average income were more likely interested in purchasing more expensive organic products. Beutel and Johnson, (2004), in this context indicate that this gender difference seems to emerge also in the youngest group of population and in a cross cultural context. However, recently, qualitative and quantitative results found by Gronhoj and Olander (2007) does not support the existence of such a difference. The outcomes are more reliable in terms of education and income. The green consumer is considered more educated and wealthier than the average consumer (Shim, 1995; Mintel, 2009). Hitherto, there appears to be a democratization of green purchasing in Europe and North America. Further, Laroche et al. (2001) observed that there is a group of consumers which transcends the socioeconomic boundaries and is willing to pay for the ethical credentials.

As now due to the sudden happenings in the society, the consumers are more responsive to the environmental change as they are taking precautions and to the eco-friendly products, marketers have been trying to influence consumer purchase behavior through environmentalism, Follows and Jobber (2000) that is focused on environmental marketing

### **3. Research question**

Whereas the green marketing strategy varies from firm to firm, there is a need to identify how far the Malaysian customers prefer on green brands and how it further influences the buying behavior? Therefore, the challenging questions here are:

- Does green marketing effort of retail shop salesman have any impact on Malaysian consumers?
- Do the green marketing efforts of retail shop salesman have any influence on brand perception among Malaysian consumers?
- Do the green marketing efforts of retail shop salesman stimulate Malaysian consumers buying behavior?
- Does education of consumers have any moderating effect on green marketing and consumer purchasing behavior?
- Does the gender of consumers have any moderating effect on green marketing and consumer purchasing behavior?

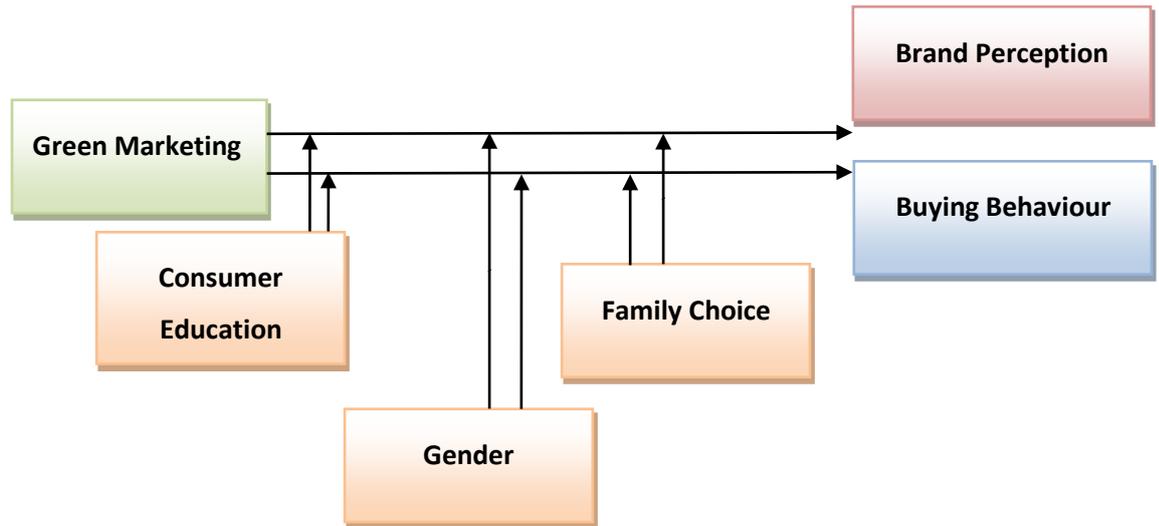
- Does family choice of consumers have any moderating effect on green marketing and consumer purchasing behavior?

Inclusively, this study will provide an understanding of green marketing and its influence on green behavior trend and preferences of Malaysian consumers.

**4. Research Framework:**

**Figure 1:**

**Assessing the influence of Green Marketing on Brand Preference and Buying Behavior**



**5. Objectives and Hypothesis**

**5.1. Objectives:**

The objective of this study is to examine the causal relationships of green marketing on brand perception and buying behavior of of Malaysian consumers in the context of retail consumer stores in Northern Malaysia. The objectives include;

1. To analyses the influence of green marketing on brand perception of Malaysian Consumers.
2. To analyses the influence of green marketing on buying behavior of Malaysian Consumers.
3. To analyses the moderating effect of education of consumers on brand perception of Malaysian Consumers.
4. To analyses the moderating effect of education of consumers on buying behavior of Malaysian Consumers.
5. To analyses the moderating effect of gender on brand perception of Malaysian Consumers.
6. To analyses the moderating effect of gender on buying behavior of Malaysian Consumers.
7. To analyses the moderating effect of family choice on brand perception of Malaysian Consumers.
8. To analyses the moderating effect of family choice on buying behavior of Malaysian Consumers.

## 5.2. Hypothesis

The hypothesis formulated in the study include;

1. Green marketing may have significant influence on brand perception on Malaysian consumers.
2. Green marketing may have significant influence on buying behavior of Malaysian consumers.
3. Education may have a moderating effect on brand perception of Malaysian Consumers.
4. Education may have a moderating effect on buying behavior of Malaysian Consumers.
5. Gender may have a moderating effect on brand perception of Malaysian Consumers.
6. Gender may have a moderating effect on buying behavior of Malaysian Consumers.
7. Family choice may have a moderating effect on brand perception of Malaysian Consumers
8. Family choice may have a moderating effect on buying behavior of Malaysian Consumers

## 6. Research Methodology

### 6.1. Population

The population selected for the study includes the retail shops and consumers in the region of Penang, Kedah and Perlis region of Malaysia. The study includes products belong to food and FMCG sector. The consumers who purchase those products and the shopkeepers who sell the products were identified as the population of this research.

### 6.2. Research Design

This research is a cross sectional in nature where the purpose is to describe the influence of green marketing on brand perception and buying behavior. The study follows the descriptive study design as its plan of action.

### 6.3. Sampling

The respondents of the sample were taken randomly from the regions and shops selected for the study. These places were regions where more number of customers frequently visit. The study follows the proportional probabilistic sample size to arrive at appropriate sample size. The researchers approached almost 781 consumers and out of which 389 consumers provided their response on brand preference and buying behavior. The study also considered 109 shops keepers following the same criteria. The sample frame is limited to the ship keepers and consumers of Kedah, Perlis and Penang region of North Malaysia.

### 6.4. Tools of Data Collection

The research will consider following tools for the data collection.

1. Questionnaire on green marketing
2. Questionnaire on Brand perception
3. Questionnaire on Buying Behavior

**6.5. Reliability**

Reliability test was conducted on the dependent variable (i.e., brand perception & buying behavior) and independent variable (green marketing).

**Table No: 1.**

**Factor Analysis**

| Sl. No | Factors          | % of variance explained | Cronbach $\alpha$ |
|--------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1      | Brand Perception | 0.3109                  | 0.812             |
| 2      | Buying Behavior  | 0.2912                  | 0.801             |
| 3      | Green Marketing  | 0.2833                  | 0.823             |

The values of Cronbach  $\alpha$  are shown in the table (table no 1). The table clearly indicates that the reliability coefficient of the study variables exceeds the minimum acceptable level of 0.60 (Nunnally, 1978). The result shows that all the dependent (brand perception and buying behavior) and independent variable (green marketing) selected for the study is having 0.8 and above, which is considered as good and acceptable.

**7. Analysis and Results**

This section discusses the results from data analysis obtained. The main purpose of this research is to examine the influence of green marketing on brand perception and buying behavior of consumers in Northern part of Malaysia. The questionnaires were distributed to consumers and the shopkeepers. The research gathered responses from 389 consumers and 109 shop keepers. The study used of Hierarchical regression model to arrive at findings and the results are indicated below.

**Hypothesis 1:** *Green marketing may have significant influence on brand perception on Malaysian consumers*

**Table No: 2. The relationship Between Green Marketing and Brand Perception**

| Model | R    | Adjusted R Squat | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               |
|-------|------|------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
|       |      |                  |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1     | .656 | .654             | .41123                     | .654              | 111.671  | 1   | 388 | .000          |

In order to test the relationship between Green Marketing and brand perception of consumers, regression analysis was conducted. The result in the table 2 clearly indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between green marketing and brand perception ( $r=.654$ ,  $n=388$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Based on the findings the study accepts the first hypothesis stated in the research.

**Hypothesis 2:** *Green marketing may have significant influence on buying behavior of Malaysian consumers*

**Table No: 3. The relationship Between Green Marketing and Buying Behavior**

| Model | R    | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               |
|-------|------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
|       |      |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1     | .616 | .612              | .43318                     | .612              | 300.121  | 1   | 388 | .000          |

In order to test the relationship between Green Marketing and buying behavior of consumers, regression analysis was conducted. The result in the table 3 clearly indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between green marketing and buying behavior ( $r=.612$ ,  $n=388$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Based on the findings the study accepts the first hypothesis stated in the research.

**Hypothesis 3:** *Education may have a moderating effect on brand perception of Malaysian consumers*

**Table No: 4. The relationship Between Education and Brand Perception**

| Model | R    | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               |
|-------|------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
|       |      |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1     | .700 | .699              | .43125                     | .699              | 311.117  | 1   | 388 | .000          |

In order to test the relationship between Education and brand perception of consumers, regression analysis was conducted. The result in the table 4 clearly indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between green marketing and brand perception ( $r=.699$ ,  $n=388$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Based on the findings the study accepts the first hypothesis stated in the research.

**Hypothesis 4:** *Education may have a moderating effect on buying behavior of Malaysian consumers*

**Table No: 5. The relationship Between Education and Buying Behavior**

| Model | R    | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               |
|-------|------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
|       |      |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1     | .689 | .686              | .45300                     | .686              | 159.33   | 1   | 388 | .000          |

In order to test the relationship between Education and brand perception of consumers, regression analysis was conducted. The result in the table 5 clearly indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between Education and buying behavior ( $r=.686$ ,  $n=388$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Based on the findings the study accepts the first hypothesis stated in the research.

**Hypothesis 5:** *Gender may have a moderating effect on brand perception of Malaysian consumers*

**Table No: 6. The relationship Between Gender and Brand perception**

| Model | R    | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               |
|-------|------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
|       |      |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1     | .391 | .390              | .41190                     | .390              | 290.012  | 1   | 388 | .121          |

In order to test the relationship between Gender and brand perception of consumers, regression analysis was conducted. The result in the table 6 clearly indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between Gender and brand perception ( $r = .390$ ,  $n = 388$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Based on the findings the study accepts the first hypothesis stated in the research.

**Hypothesis 6:** *Gender may have a moderating effect on buying behavior of Malaysian consumers*

**Table No: 7. The relationship Between Gender and Buying Behavior**

| Model | R    | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               |
|-------|------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
|       |      |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1     | .656 | .655              | .40102                     | .655              | 290.001  | 1   | 388 | .000          |

In order to test the relationship between Gender and Buying Behavior of consumers, regression analysis was conducted. The result in the table 7 clearly indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between Gender and Buying Behavior ( $r = .655$ ,  $n = 388$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Based on the findings the study accepts the first hypothesis stated in the research.

**Hypothesis 7:** *Family Choice may have a moderating effect on brand perception of Malaysian consumers*

**Table No: 8. The relationship Between Family Choice and Brand Perception**

| Model | R    | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               |
|-------|------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
|       |      |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1     | .692 | .688              | .41102                     | .688              | 292.843  | 1   | 388 | .000          |

In order to test the relationship between Family Choice and brand perception of consumers, regression analysis was conducted. The result in the table 8 clearly indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between Family Choice and brand perception ( $r = .688$ ,  $n = 388$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Based on the findings the study accepts the first hypothesis stated in the research.

**Hypothesis 8:** *Family Choice may have a moderating effect on buying behavior of Malaysian consumers*

**Table No: 9. The relationship Between Family Choice and Buying Behavior**

| Model | R    | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               |
|-------|------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
|       |      |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1     | .656 | .653              | .40124                     | .653              | 290.145  | 1   | 388 | .000          |

In order to test the relationship between Family Choice and buying behavior of consumers, regression analysis was conducted. The result in the table 8 clearly indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between Family Choice and buying behavior ( $r=.653$ ,  $n=388$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Based on the findings the study accepts the first hypothesis stated in the research.

**8. Discussion**

The Major objective of the present research was to explore the relationship between green marketing and Malaysian consumer brand perception and buying behavior. The finding of the research indicates a positive relationship among green marketing and consumer brand perception and buying behavior. The study observes close association between sub variables of green marketing with sub variables of consumer brand perception and buying behavior at 0.01 levels. While, buying behavior is highly moderated by the socio-demographic factors, so that, a bunch of consumers' (male and less educated consumers) are not clearly influenced by the green marketing strategies of business organization and shopkeepers.

It is observed that a century of intensive research has undertaken to understand human attitude and how people behave during their shopping. But due to varied behavioral trend and situational factors a conclusion regarding the same found still impossible. Through the study of green marketing and moderating factors, this research examines, basic factors which work in the human mind and which intern influence the consumer perception and buying behavior, which are applied in contemporary cognitive research. Several literature discusses about green marketing and pays attention to the relationship between customers' attitudes and green marketing strategies of shop keepers. Green marketing is a concept which has created considerable significant in the modern market and consumer buying behavior with minimum detrimental impact on the natural environment. The green marketing process tries to influence the attitude of the consumer when they have to take a purchasing decision. It is the marketing that includes environmental issues in the marketing efforts. The basic idea is that customers are provided with information on the environmental effect of the products and they can and use this information while deciding which product to purchase. Those aspects will in turn make companies more inclined to produce products that are better from an environmental point of view (Rex & Baumann, 2007). It tries to satisfy the consumer needs by adopting environmentally harmless consumption oriented approaches integrating safety of consumers. Both marketers and consumers are becoming increasingly aware about the need to switch into green and green products and services considering the long term impact may provide to their quality of life.

The present study clearly indicates that green marketing has high influence on the brand perception of consumers. The brand is essentially the collection of all experiences, a consumer related to the product, service, and companies that make, deliver and consume the product. As far as green brand is concerned brand perceptions are shaped by functional experiences (i.e. quality, reliability, ease of use, environment friendly) as well as emotional experiences (i.e. Make me feel better, improve my performance, make my life/job more gratifying or easier) the customer associates with the product and the company. The present study analyses the marketer's effort in developing green interest through their branding and marketing efforts. Marketers work hard to create an emotional link between consumers and the brands those marketers promote. It would take a long period to understand the consumer, share the information about green, the advantages of going green and influence their purchasing behavior on green products and services. In this process the marketers have to establish an emotional link by aligning a brand's identity with the consumer's sense of self, value orientation, quality of life, environmental consciousness and many marketing mix variables. Consumers expect companies to have green products that are superior or at least on par with conventional products. They expect that the switching over towards green brands from the traditional brand need to meet all promises that the green brand promised during their product confusing and if they feel that the expectations are not met, despite good intentions, the shopkeeper's are not able to make a positive influence that they anticipated. So green marketing is a tough task to the shop keepers.

The brand perception and buying behavior lay on the emotional appeal and attachment of consumers on the product and services. The present study indicates worthy effort of the shopkeepers in promoting 'green brand' among the Malaysian consumers and that effort is having a high impact on green brand perception and purchasing decision, creating emotional attachment and environmental values. It is rightly pointed out by Kar, (2010) in this context that that consumer behavior has changed greatly over the last 25 years but it has been evolving and the seeds of change have been apparent for generations. The Malaysian consumer feels that the green products are highly relevant to their life that aligns to their actual sense of self. To a considerable extent their buying behavior and perception towards brands are influenced by the green marketing trends and efforts of the shop keepers.

The study analyzed the effect of moderating variables on the green marketing influence on brand perception and purchasing behavior of the consumers. The findings clearly indicate that education has a clear role in brand perception and purchasing behavior of Malaysian consumers. It is observed that the consumer who are having higher education is highly correlated with the green product brand perception and purchasing behavior compared to those having a low education level. This indicates that higher learning provides better information about the green products to the consumers and they are well aware of the benefits they derive from the purchase of green products. For example, some authors have suggested that younger, well educated, individuals are more likely to be environmentally aware and concerned than their older, less educated, counterparts. (Brody et al., 2004). The high educates consumer is emotionally well perceived and attached with greener products. Effective green marketing effort from the shop keeper itself acts as environmental education programs. It develops more of cognitive and affective base to the consumers thought process and influence their purchasing behavior. Consumer's utilitarian perspectives on green products and long term benefits of going green are well correlated with their higher learning in this research. The role of education thus plays a moderating effect on the green marketing influence on brand preference and consumer buying behavior. While the brand perception and buying behavior are less influenced by the green marketing effort of the business organization and shop keepers. This group is considered as the major sect of consumers is less influenced by green marketing and has shown less interest to go with green. Its result may be related to green awareness and marketing strategies.

The second moderating variable considered for the study was the gender. The findings indicate that the green marketing effort is well related to gender's role in brand perception and buying behavior. The female member is having a high attitude towards going green. They are having a high perception towards green brands and show their keen interest towards green products and services, compared to the male counterpart. This research finding is supported by past research reports like Magnusson et al. (2001) mention that women and young respondents (18-25 years) are particularly positive toward organic products. A decade earlier, Byrne et al. (1990) had also found that young females with a high school degree and above average income were more likely interested in purchasing more expensive organic products. This indicates that the female population is more susceptible to the shopkeepers in marketing green awareness and green products and service compared to male members. The role of gender in the prediction of environmental concern and consciousness was previously confirmed in a 2001 study by Rausepp, who stated that women are generally more environmentally aware than men. Interest in more awareness about going green enable the shop keepers to disseminate the formation easily to female consumers. The basic gender difference in effective listening and observation during brand preference, products section and purchasing decision is well reflected in this finding. Gender thus plays a moderating effect on the green marketing influence on brand preference and consumer buying behavior. While the perception of male members on brand perception and buying behavior is less influence by the green marketing effort of the business organization and shop keepers. Male consumers are considered as one of the major sect of consumers is less influenced by green marketing and has shown less interest to go with green. The result may be co-related to green awareness and marketing strategies.

The finding related to third moderating variable family choice indicates that the preference of family members also having a moderating effect on consumer purchasing decision making process. Family is the most influential group for the consumer. The family's influence comes from the fact that the bonds within the family are likely to be much more powerful and intimate than those in other small groups. It is well accepted in the past literature that the family members can strongly influence buyer behavior. The parents and significant others in the family have a better say in the purchasing decision. Marketers closely watch the interest of the interested and the relative influence of the family members on the purchase of a large variety of products and services. The findings indicate that the green marketing process is well moderated by the family members in their decision regarding brand and purchase green products. It is rightly indicated by Ewing (2001) that social norms can motivate consumers to opt for an ecologically responsible behavior. The consumer's family and peers influence the purchasing decisions (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2004). The finding of this study also found that social influence has a deep impact to consumer's decision making. Substantiating the findings it is well reported in the past that (Ad Age, 2008), recommendations from family and friends trump all others consumer touch points when it comes to influencing purchases. The role of family choice thus plays a moderating effect on the green marketing influence on brand preference and consumer buying behavior.

## **9. Implications**

This particular research identifies following major implications based on the result and discussion.

The study suggests that the green marketing effort of the shopkeepers of the retail shops is a likely influential factor of green brand perception and green buying behavior. The findings indicate that the shop keepers can effectively act as knowledge disseminate that to induce better information about going green and green product sales. They can induce the better brand perception to the Malaysian

consumers. The effective green marketing strategy of the companies and the retail shops can influence the buying behavior of the consumers and induce the better brand perception. More effort from the companies by making provision of better information based training to the shop keepers and sales people may produce better sales of green products through retail shops.

The findings indicate that the 'educated consumers' are the prospective buyers of green products in this research. This indicates that the green marketing efforts of the shopkeepers are effective towards educating customers. While the major group needs to be targeted is the less educated consumers whom having less information about the green products. Less educated consumers do not have any brand perception and they always move with traditional buying mode. This major group may considerably influence the green products business in retail shops.

The findings of the research show that green marketing efforts are more effective towards females compared to males. The females are having more affinity towards green brands. It will be easier for the shopkeepers to market the product to female consumers. While how to convince and influence the male members is the question left to the retailers and the companies.

More importance needs to be given to the group purchasing decision. Since group business conversion produces better business to the companies compared to individual business conversion. The present research findings indicate the effect of family choice on buying behavior and brand perception. The importance of family members' decision to go with or without green products has to be influenced through better green marketing effort. Effective green marketing strategies of retail shops and companies which influence the all the family members considering a different age group of members can pave better behavioral change among them toward going green and green buying behavior.

## **10. Conclusion**

The present study focuses on effect on green marketing in brand perception and buying behavior of consumers. The study well correlated the green marketing effort of the shopkeepers on brand perception and consumer buying behavior. The study was conducted on consumers of Northern part of Malaysia. The findings indicate that more than direct relation between green marketing in brand perception and buying behavior, the moderating actor have a high influence on the green marketing in brand perception and buying behavior. The role of educated consumer, gender difference and family choice for green brand is well reflected in this research. Based on the findings it is envisaged that the business organization and retail establishments should concentrate their green marketing strategies to the wall with the educated consumer, gender difference and family choice. The green business is not only circled around educating people and female members. On the contrary, the difficult task for the strategic marketing would be how to tackle the less educated people, male consumers and members of different age group in the family. Ecological conscience of consumers which results in the increased demand for green products, a phenomenon that is well exploited by a great number of enterprises, which start offering green products and services. Hence, more effort from the business organizations and shopkeepers are envisaged to disseminate green brand and green consumer behavior among consumers. Future research should be conducted to get more generalized understanding of the findings that may pave better acceptance of these relevant findings.

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