

ANALYZING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES ON ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPPORTIVE BEHAVIOUR AMONG MALAYSIAN AND NIGERIAN CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT: *The study reviews and highlights the influence of environmentally supportive behaviour among Malaysian and Nigerian consumers. The review identifies various barriers with emphases on the issues and challenges affecting both nations and how the barriers can be stopped. Based on the conceptual review, the study concludes that there is still an inappropriate strategy for the implementation of green behaviour in emerging nations. Specifically, there is a gap in awareness, education, negative perception, distrust of green claims and behaviour among green consumers. The study further argues that institutional and cultural differences impact consumers in both nations. If individual citizens could participate fully or embrace environmentally supportive behaviour, the nature and humanity can be saved from the environmental threat and pitfall. Suggestions included in this study is aimed to help green managers formulate an appropriate strategy to encourage sustainable lifestyle and behaviour.*

Keywords: Environmentally Supportive Behaviour, Cross-Cultural Study, Sustainable Consumption, Emerging Nations

1. INTRODUCTION

Global opportunities and threat have made consumers in a developed country to go green and this also has become a necessity in developing nations like Malaysia and Nigeria [1-2]. According to Gifford and Nilsson [3], the understanding of environmentally supportive behaviour is far more complex than it is previously thought, and determining the reason or barrier for people to adopt greener lifestyle has become a more complex issue [4]. Whilst, in some cases, consumers can still enumerate their value for the environmental behaviour and other issues may take precedence over their concern for the environment [1]. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 12 focuses on consumption and production patterns, which could help to authorize efficient resource use, reduce environmental footprint and reduce the impact of economic activities on the environment as well as strengthen economic competitiveness [5]. In light of this, Goal 12 of the SDGs is targeted to optimize the use of resources and to ensure that unsafe products or waste are well managed in forms that will minimize the effect on the nature and human being [5,6].

According to the World Economic Forum [7], recent figures indicate that 7.5 billion people live across the world globally. This account for about 75% across Asia and Africa with an estimation of 4.5 billion in Asia representing 60%, and another 1.2 billion in Africa representing the remaining 15%. This is estimated to be two-thirds of the global population and will have a consequence on what people consume most, especially consumer goods, housing, mobility, food and leisure [5,8]. With this urban shift, there will be an immense social implication on how consumers carry out their lifestyles and demonstrate their emotions to the environment [5,9]. Prior to the report on the lapse on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it shows that the growth on countless developmental issues was not satisfactory in emerging countries. Questions were being raised on the possibilities and prospects of the SDGs to flourish if they cannot thrive in emerging countries, which are rapidly growing population, and majorly requires changes in the scheme described [5-7].

The SDGs are exceeding more purposeful in attaining and ensuring environmental sustainability and are highly promising than the MDGs. Whether or not the emerging countries achieve Goal 12 of the SDGs, it will be dependent on the resolution that is taken in solving the issues and challenges confronting the planet [10,11]. As emerging countries seek to defeat poverty and impoverishment by growing their economies, the growing middle classes are innovatively advocating for material-intensive lifestyles like their counterparts in the western nations [12]. A country like Malaysia has witnessed considerable urbanization and growing middle class countries made it possible by robust economic performance. Therefore, the number of consumption activities and environmental impact are growing. Environmental Quality Act 1974 was enacted to protect the environment, with serious consideration in maintaining human needs [13,14]. The Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water, was set up to serve the rising need and the importance of green technology towards sustainable advancement. The legislature has taken a bold step and enacted a program AFFIRM which helps in building up the environmental sustainability. AFFIRM stands for Awareness, Faculty, Finance, Infrastructure, Research Development and Commercialization and Marketing [14]. This acronym was mainly designed to obtain commitment from all stakeholders in committing towards environmental protection. The buyer preferences are also changing over time and people are gradually aware of the environmental issues. Some have a disagreeable perception on environmentally friendly goods that they unwillingly purchase [15]. While the demand for green brands is also increasing. There were very few studies conducted in emerging countries [1,2,16,17] and the results often vary either due to differences in behaviour or culture [2,17].

Some experts believed that green marketing studies in emerging countries are relatively less compared to the western context [1,14,18,19]. Thus, it is important to understand the green behaviour and psychographics issues. In Nigeria, the demand for sustainability is gaining gradual

in-depth understanding among the people and green agenda has been promoted by the government since 1990 [20], which aims at promoting environmental sustainability projects. 'Green' has become a common term of discourse among policymakers. Emerging nations are also starting to appreciate environmental protection, albeit having varying views on the issue. According to the recent report, Nigeria is among the sovereign nation in Sub-Saharan African besides South Africa, Kenya and Ghana that top the lead on promoting projects with an environmental sustainability focus [21,22]. Despite the efforts, Nigeria still lagged and confronted with several peculiar challenges that caused its green concept unattainable [19,20]. On top of these, inefficiencies in energy conservation, poor waste management and worsening eco-pollution also were among the concerns [21]. There were also many green technologies deficit and shortfall such as absence of appropriate policies to regulations and stimulation of demand for green practices to attract investors [21]. A recent study cited in an academic science journal has shown that Nigeria consumers do not know much about 'green' [19]. The overall economy also has its peculiar inadequacy as indicated that approximately 30% of its citizens are environmentally friendly [23].

Despite having resources being invested and huge market potential that exists in both countries, Malaysia and Nigeria are falling behind, on the global green economic index (GGEI) with both nations scoring 49% and 50% respectively from a 130-country survey on green status according to Dual Citizen Inc. Experts have argued that negative perception among citizens could have resulted in this lag [24]. Furthermore, most of the consumers in Malaysia and Nigeria also fear of what constitutes 'green' as both countries are not graded among the best-performing countries unlike the western nations [18,25]. Researchers like Chen and Chai [9], and Cheah [26] argued that there is an increasing demand for green brands in the emerging market, as their studies show an understanding of generation Y consumers and these were limited to only a few determinants. Consumers who are aware of environmental issues tend to have positive mindset towards green activities. However, a variety of factors could have influenced them. This paper review will narrow the literature gap by discussing these conceptual issues that are influencing the consumers. The dominant factors that affect the consumers in one country might differ from another due to diverse cultural and socioeconomic status. Hence, the main objective of this review paper is to highlight the issues affecting green consumer behaviour.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Environmentally supportive behaviour

Environmentally supportive behaviour is a component of private and public sphere behaviour that includes all the concerns, thoughts, feelings and actions an individual or people in the society display on environmental matters such as purchasing eco-products and exhibiting a specific behaviour on answering what, how, when and why such person is making a purchase benefiting health or fulfilling the environmental needs [24]. Green behaviour is all about the behaviour and it is defined as the overall household behaviour that has a meaningful impact on the environment [24,27]. This behaviour can be best described as a single behaviour that has been exhibited by a single consumer in a privately reserved manner notwithstanding his/her cultural background aimed at safeguarding nature. Keenan [28] stated that telecommuters are involved in environmental sustainable habits. This implies that people tend to be more

conscious of their environment when they are at home (private behavior), rather than at the office (public behavior). An individual who can go green either at private or public, shows private supportive behaviour that is more frequently at home than at public or at workplaces. Accordingly, 74% of the employees in the United States conserved energy at home and do not behave likewise in public places. The study further reveals that they believe in upcycling and recycling processes, thereby discarding water bottle and consuming lesser printing paper at home. Yet, these behaviour are not displayed at offices or public places. Similarly, green consumers are more environmentally impacted at home and this attribute is common among women. Experts argued that 60% of the consumers adopt eco-friendly habits than the men which are less likely to recycle [28]. In Malacca, a state in Malaysia, the green initiative has been implemented and enforced with the "no plastic bag day" initiatives and a periodic check has been ensured to make consumers adhere to the rules to preserve the environment and exercise supportive behaviour [29].

Besides, green culture is also associated with public sphere behaviour channel towards a green movement that is committed to the involvement of environmental activism through various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as signing off petitions on global environmental issues and contributing to environmental organisations [24,30]. In line with this, green culture has been characterized as 'green' and 'culture', with 'green' fulfilling the environmental matters such as recycling, reducing and reusing, while 'culture' fulfilling the behaviour to act, awareness, belief, value and norms of people in the society. These words makeup a lifestyle of making willful choice and commitment regarding the resource adapted for everyday lifestyle to reduce the negative effects on the environment. In spite of different variations in the countless definitions of the word 'culture', there is an agreement among experts that culture is distributed among people and is tutored from one generation to another to influence people's opinion or views [31]. For the society to adapt and embrace a green culture, there should be public policies on the need for the entire consumers to behave greenly. For instance, consumers need to go paperless on every single purchase they made as it has been noticed that most used papers issued on every purchase as a receipt cannot be recycled and cannot be separated during recycling process due to the toxic chemicals composition present on the purchase receipt.

2.2 Issues of environmentally supportive behaviour in malaysia

Verifiable studies on environmentally supportive behaviour in Malaysia is gradually picking up among green consumers. The recent economic upswing has enhanced the financial capacity of green consumers who are willing to spend extra on green products than the previous generation. Empirical studies have shown that Malaysians have intensified support in performing ecological behaviour [32]. Majorly, it has been observed that young people in Malaysia are engaged in supportive behaviour, recycling, and reusing old clothes and garments by giving it a new life, such as through H&M conscious line initiative, a global system to collect used clothing and make them into new brands [33]. It is even more attractive when the consumers who are also 'fashion recycler' get 15% discount voucher for their contribution in every new selection of item of the same line. This initiative aims to decrease fashion waste which makes up 10% of the humanity carbon

emission, support environmental sustainability and close the fashion loop. In giving a new life to old textiles, Malaysians have embraced the environmentally supportive behaviour which has translated into green activism. This has shown that many Malaysians are aware of the environmental impact and this awareness should be heavily considered by everyone in their purchasing decision. However, some consumers have yet to translate this behaviour on organic products due to poor perception [32]. Interestingly, some literature works show that many Muslim green consumers in Malaysia is committed to protecting the environment as the practice of environmental protection is a strong obligation in Islamic teachings [32,34]. This is because the environmental protection aims to reduce adverse environmental impacts and this is also aligned with the Islamic teachings as declared by Al-Quran and As-Sunnah [34]. Muslim consumers believe that in Islam, the environment is regarded as an endowment from Allah to human to live sustainably and they have to protect it for the wellbeing of all. In line with this, it is important to protect the environment in every way by behaving greenly and adopting environmentally supportive behaviour. To sum up, Malaysians can reconsider of their way of life especially on recent climate change by conquering the environmental issues. These issues have had a large impact on environmental standards not only in Malaysia but also in Nigeria and other parts of the world. The beliefs and norms of the consumers in a society are largely related to their religion and its roots [32]. Green behavioural and cultural activities could be reformed towards favourable environmental behaviour by the concept in religion and norms which have a societal impact on doctrine towards the change of new things that are influential to the society and humanity. This shows that environmentally supportive behaviour i.e. green culture and green behaviour or private and public sphere behaviour cannot be separated.

2.3 Issues of environmentally supportive behaviour in nigeria

As a growing middle class country, Nigeria has experienced considerable urbanization within the limits of capacity as a result of upward economic performance. Accordingly, its environmental issues have witnessed some changes within the middle class. In this regards, the behaviour on demand for consumption has motivated consumers to carry on green practices despite the low level of awareness among different consumers' economic status. Some studies have argued that few aggregates of Nigeria businesses are environmentally friendly but citizens are not well informed on green marketing [19,23]. Literature work also revealed that 69% of the general public believed that the environmental problem and pollution had a great impact on their everyday lifestyle [35] and the majority of green consumer segment is now fully aware of sustainable development and what constitutes 'green' [20,23]. Karatu and Mat [20], argued that despite the global awareness, only 5% of the Nigerians are willing to purchase purposeful sustainable brands, while some observers argued that Nigeria has a special market for recycled goods and products to reduce environmental footprint [36]. There is nothing much has been invested to be at par with its counterparts in the developed nations and this has limit green businesses, creating a gap in green consumerism in Nigeria. Yet, Nigerians are willing to embrace supportive behaviour and adopt green brands although this might be seen as luxury. However, because of their demand for housing and education, there is a limited demand for green

consumerism. In Nigeria, a lot of energy has been dissipated due to households private behaviour. Most of the industries use more energy than what is necessary to satisfy their daily needs, which later affects the natural environment leading to energy depredation [37]. Supportive behaviour has some fragments and the results were inconsistent due to cultural, demographic setting and complexity in behaviour [16,20]. Some observers believed that consumers in Nigeria are mainly engaged in green because it enables them to make a profit while others viewed it as an avenue for satisfying their need/utmost desires. Undeniably, environmentally supportive behaviour emphasizes environmental stewardship that embodies the degree and responsibility of natural resources as it applied to human environmental factor and management in understanding business responsibility or industrial goal [30,38]. Nigeria has witnessed rapid economic growth in recent years and some regions have become favoured than the other. Consequently, there is a rapid urban growth with a shift in development from the rural to the urban region. Without adequate and sufficient monitoring by the government, this growth affects how the consumers behave and consequently increasing the mountain of garbage in most cities thereby causing environmental harm in which 30 to 40% of the environmental degradation is caused by consumption activities from private household's consumption [23]. By now, the consumers have started translating their eco-friendly attitude into action [19,37].

2.4 Challenges faced by both country

It is difficult to grow and develop a concept that is still not well understood by the people in the society. These challenges hinder its sustainability due to poor perception [19,39]. The challenges faced in emerging nations like Malaysia and Nigeria are not limited to negative perception, product distrust, high product price, low product availability, lack of development for green products and choice in the decision-making process only, but some companies are also reluctant to support green attributes. This causes the citizens to be skeptical about the claims and they are nowhere near to the ideal green consumer concept [19]. Environmental issues that are affecting consumers are also among the things to be considered. Malaysia and Nigeria are facing competitive threats like air pollution caused by human interference and inadequate sanitation system [19,39]. However, green marketing and environmental sustainability are not promising and desired in emerging nations with 61.2% of the population living on less than a dollar [25,40]. With a low-income state, the consumers cannot afford the brands associated with high quality. Price is a hurdle to purchasing green products. This also indicates that the policymakers must regulate the price of green products so that it is affordable and the customers can meet their primary needs [19,20,23,39]. Another challenge faced by both countries is lack of standardization on implementing public consensus about what constitutes green and defeatist perception.

Moreover, consumers sometimes can identify green products correctly but the labelling proves to be confusing. However, some products have quickly become status symbols while some suffer image challenges. Product distrust has its challenges; consumers are uncertain not only in product quality but also the greenness of the products. Some green consumers also believe that product certainty is mandated by law. The non-existence of consensus among

policymakers has demonstrated slow and limited growth of the products. It is a common knowledge that laws are not followed, judging from the environmental abuse by some impact analysis report linking how consumers and policymakers act. Like most developing countries such as Malaysia, waste in Nigeria is dumped at main locations leading to illegal dumping site causing environmental issues. There is no formal recycling of resource recovery initiative in both nations and no policy on composting is imposed yet [36].

Environmental waste recycling and recovery are carried out mostly by the informal sector. The scavengers pick up waste for free and sort any recyclables before the disposal of the waste. Specifically, 60% of the environmental waste aggregate in Nigeria is organic waste and only 8% have been recovered for reuse purposes [36]. In most developing nations, waste stream such as domestic and industrial waste is over 50% of organic material [41]. In the Asian region, residual waste comprised of 78%, 81% compostable material, market waste 89% and 90% compostable [42]. The socio-environmental belief is the mission and vision statements that policymakers should follow. However, when it comes to implementation, policymakers should develop the right culture to prevent the challenges that have been faced at the original sphere. Malaysia and Nigeria green market are moving gradually towards the obtainable industrial market, particularly in the area of goods delivery and services that are ecologically friendly and there is a need in breaking down these challenges.

3. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study highlights issues and challenges of the green behaviour in Malaysia and Nigeria for sustainable green practices. Environmentally supportive behaviour is a component of corporate social responsibility with a key focus on environmental management and sustainability. The issues in these areas have been causing different potential drawbacks in the society despite the early stage work in the developing nations. Green myopia is another issue experienced by consumers. For the green behaviour effort to succeed in the emerging countries, companies need to fulfil the environmental quality of their sustainable products and satisfy the consumers' needs. Over time, when the standards are misjudged or when they are ignored by practitioners, green marketing myopia occurs. Increasing environmental awareness participation will eventually lead to an increase in environmentally supportive behaviour. Achieving and attaining sustainable living will require developing countries to rely increasingly on their natural resources that have been wasted due to human involvement. At this point, they should implement a robust institutional check on the executive and legislative authority to strengthen local environmental laws. The investment in environmental institutions and infrastructure will promote environmentally supportive behaviour. False claims or misrepresentations are another key issues that affect sustainable consumption. Many businesses claim that they are following the concept of environmental standards, yet not doing so which has created a lot of issues in developing nations. Therefore, companies need to be honest and rebuild the trust of the public. They must inform accurate information on environmental impact and their effort to lessen such impact to the society. Education has been widely observed to be an impending issue that influences

the green consumer in developing nations. The majority are unaware that green replacement and businesses must first think of themselves as educators, not as sales assistant. They must expand their plans over their brands to the larger wide range of issues on environmental and climate problems. Due to this, the government and NGOs must also take up the project of green education.

For citizens to improve their opinions/attitude towards environmentally supportive behaviour, businesses must build better products as the conventional substitute because people will value products scalability, durability, reliability and performance more than products environmental condition. The green products must perform better than other traditional products to hold their image. Green products must offer more to increase sales, and the business owners also have to understand both consumer revenues; particularly in terms of environmental and financial. The consumers will try new green product when they find it safe, specially the costly ones. Consumers are more confident about the brand when they understand how the products help the environment. Unfortunately, green products are not widely available and it is quite difficult to locate them. Companies should bring the green products to the people because they cannot sell products if consumers cannot find them. Therefore, businesses alone cannot lead people from the intention of buying to the action. In most instances, civil society and government parastatals need to decisively be involved in accomplishing and enduring changes in environmentally supportive behaviour

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