ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIOURS: A CROSS CULTURAL STUDY OF MALAYSIAN CONSUMERS

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Submitted to the Graduate School of Business Faculty of Business and Accountancy University of Malaya, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Business Administered

JULY 2011

ABSTRACT

This study attempted to examine Malaysian consumers across multi-cultural roots; mainly Malay, Chinese and Indian in terms of their environmental knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. A survey was carried out using a self-administered questionnaire. A total of 300 Malaysian respondents (150 Malays, 100 Chinese and 50 Indians) were targeted and recruited through quota-convenience-sampling. Surveys were distributed in various locations in Klang Valley such as hospitals, shopping malls, recreational parks, university and business centres. The respondents were required to complete the questionnaire in 15 minutes and return it back on the spot.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts: Part A carried open-ended questions that measured environmental knowledge, whilst Part B and C measured: environmental attitudes and behaviours, respectively. Part D collected demographic data of respondents.

The results indicated that, in general, respondents' basic environmental knowledge was high. However, when questioned on various environmental terms and concepts, the majority of the respondents were not familiar with most of them. Cultural differences of respondents were observed in terms of their environmental knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. The Chinese were actually more knowledgeable on environmental issues, perceived environmental problems as more severe and more willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products than Malays or Indians. On the other hand, Indians perceived being environmental friendly is not inconvenient and more likely to adopt recycling act, and Malays were likely to buy environmental harmful products. The study also found that consumers' environmental knowledge, environmental attitudes (severity of environmental problems and inconvenience of being environmentally friendly) and environmental behaviour (recycling and considering environmental issues when making a purchase) were found correlated with the willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products. Overall regression analysis showed that "considering environmental issues when making a purchase" was the most important determinant of respondents' willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products.

Green marketers are encouraged to know well the "green" profile of each ethnic group in order to develop strategies specifically targeted to them effectively. For Chinese consumers, green marketers should advertise their products rigorously as to instill the perception of their brands as reputable and trustworthy brands. Specifically, advertising should be on information appeal with potential benefits highlight in it to target this green Chinese segment. On the other hand, to target Malay consumers, green marketers should increase their green products availability at the most convenient locations to make green purchasing as less hassle as possible. Finally, for Indian consumers, green marketers might consider to produce goods that could be recycled in order to

attract this segment. Subsequently, with this valuable insights and information, many green marketers and even Malaysian government would be able to improve the communication effectiveness of their educational and promotional campaign across the three ethnic groups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deepest gratefulness to my supervisor, Professor Md. Nor Othman for his invaluable assistance in the successful completion of this study. His wise suggestions and guidance are very much appreciated.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the staffs of the office of the Graduate School of Business, University of Malaya and to my fellow coursemates who have helped me in this study.

To my family members and friends, I wish to express my gratitude for their understanding and concern during the whole process of this study.

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