

# Degree of commitment to the environment marketing essay



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Attitudes can be used to categorize the consumers degree of commitment to the environment (List, 1993; Roper Organization, 1992). Attitude is defined as a mental and neural state of readiness, which organized direction to actions, exerting a direct and dynamic power on the individuals response to all related objects or situations (Allport, 1935). Attitudes are the combinations of three components which include beliefs, feelings and behavioral intention (Tsen et al., 2006). The three components of attitudes are not independent and strongly correlated with each other which can be used to explain how a consumer response to an object. In short, consumers attitudes refer to what he or she like and dislike (Blackwell et al., 2006). Attitudes of environmental concern are rooted in a persons concept of self and the degree to which an individual perceives him or herself to be an integral part of the natural environment (Schultz et al., 2000, p. 443). Environmental attitude refer to cognitive judgment towards the value of environmental protection (Lee, 2009, p. 88). In other words, the environmental attitudes of the consumers must, by definition, express their care on preserving and protecting the environment (Kinnear et al., 1974). According to Mainieri et al. (1997), specific environmental belief (specific attitude) forecast the consumer pro-environmental purchasing behavior more exactly as compared to the general environmental belief. But there are other researchers argue that there is a significant relationship between general environmental belief (general attitude) and the consumer pro-environmental purchasing behavior (Kim & Choi, 2003; Tilikidou, 2007). There are abundant studies showed that consumers environmental attitudes are the significant and consistent predictors of the ecologically friendly

behavior (Balderjahn, 1988; Schwepker & Cornwell, 1991; McCarty & Shrum, 1994; Roberts, 1996; Chan, 1999; Kalafatis et al., 1999; Laroche et al., 2001), pro-environmental purchasing behaviors (Schlegelmilch, Greg & Diamantopoulos, 1996; Rios et al., 2006), participating in the green community and attending public talks on the awareness of the environment (Wallgren, 1991). Besides, attitudes are the most explanatory factor in predicting the willingness of the consumers to pay for green products (Chyong et al., 2006). By having more future insights into the consumers environmental attitudes, it can help businesses to create market for the green products (Roberts, 1996).

Purchasing of environmental-friendly products can help to improve the quality level of the environment is a general assumption among the researchers and environmentalists (Muhmim, 2007). According to Irland (1993) and Schwepker and Cornwell (1991), consumers are often based on their environmental attitudes in the purchase decisions. This is due to their desire to solve the environmental issues, to become the role model to others and beliefs that they can help to protect the environment (Hallin, 1995; McCarty & Shrum, 2001). The consumers who are willing to pay more for the green products believe that it is important to be environmental friendly and concern about the environment (Laroche et al., 2001). On the other hands, Vlosky et al. (1999) found out that although environmental attitudes have a strongly influence in the consumers purchases; they are not always based on their environmental attitudes in the purchase decision.

Kotchen and Reiling (2000) describe that there is a positive relationship between environmental attitude and environmental behavior. But Davis <https://assignbuster.com/degree-of-commitment-to-the-environment-marketing-essay/>

(1995) stated that relationship between environmental attitude and environmental behavior is very insignificant or weak. In addition, there is a positive correlation between environmental attitudes and environmental knowledge which means that the socially conscious consumers who have more environmental knowledge will tend to have positive environmental attitudes (Antil, 1984) which will result in the consumption of green products (Balderjahn, 1988; Crosby et al., 1981; Schuhwerk & Lefkock-Hagius, 1995). Consumers who are really concerned about the pollution will take several actions in order to reduce the pollution level (Balderjahn, 1988). The more a consumer believed in the power of individual, the more he or she consumes the green products (Balderjahn, 1988). But Laroche et al (2002) argue that the positive environmental attitudes of the consumers will not lead to the actual purchasing of the environmental-friendly products in the practice. Situational requirements can become the barriers during the purchase decision of the green products (Dembkowski & Hanmer-Lloyd, 1994).

According to Berger and Corbin (1992), the perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) of the consumers might influence their environmental behavior. Kim (2002) stated that PCE is an important concept in describing the relationship between environmental attitudes and consumer behavior and yet, the determinants of the green purchase behavior. PCE is defined as the evaluation of the self in the context of the issue (Berger & Corbin, 1992, p. 80-81) or refers to the extent to which an individual believe their action can help to solve the environmental problems (Antil, 1978). As compare to the other demographic or psychographic factors, Robert (1996) found out that PCE is the strongest predictors of the ecology conscious consumer

behavior. There is a positive relationship between PCE and green consumerism (Kinnear et al., 1974; Roberts, 1996). The theory of reasoned action found out that an individual belief his or her action can make a change in the environmental problems will tend to engage in that particular action (Gill, Grosby & Taylor, 1986). The socially conscious consumer belief their ability can solve the environmental issues and will consider the impact of the product-purchases to the environment (Webster, 1975). Hence, they will engage in the pro-environmental purchasing behavior in order to make a contribution to the environment (Ellen, Weiner & Walgren, 1991).

### 2. 3. 2 Demographics

Demography is the study of human populations in terms of size, density, location, age, gender, race, occupation and other statistics (Kotler et al., 2007). Demographic variables are easier to measure as compared to the other variables (Kotler et al., 2007). Demographic profiles of green consumers were analyzed by various researchers in order to understand the green consumers behavior or eco-friendly attitude (Roberts, 1990; Ottman & Reilly, 1998; Straughan & Roberts, 1999; Getzner & Grabner-Kruter, 2004).

#### (a) Age

There are a lot of researchers explored the age variable in the early studies of sustainable or green marketing (Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Kinnear et al., 1974; Aaker & Bagozzi, 1982; Roberts, 1996; Jain & Kaur, 2006; DSouza et al., 2007). It had been proven that the average age of green consumers are lower than the typical consumers, which means that young consumers are more alert and concerned about the environmental issues

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(Arcury, 1990; Straughan & Roberts, 1999; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Memery, Megicks & Williams, 2005; DSouza et al., 2007). Younger consumers play an important role in the market as compared to the older consumers due to their purchasing power across a variety number of product categories (Chan & Lau, 2000). Besides, younger consumers are more emphasis on perception and they are risk takers, while older consumers are looking for the products attributes and features (Mark, Kalmas & Laroche, 2005; Getzner & Grabner-Kr? uter, 2004). However, according to the do Pa? o; Raposo and Filho (2009); Roberts (1996) and Ebreo (1990), the ecologically conscious consumers are older than the average. In addition, the study done by Ottman and Reilly (1998) proven that green consumers are normally in the age group of 30-44 years old.

Samdahl and Robertson (1989) and Roberts (1996) stated that there is a positive and significant relationship between age and ecologically conscious consumer behavior. Van Liere and Dunlap (1981) and Zimmer et al. (1994) argue that the relationship is significant but negatively correlated. On the other hands, there is no significant correlation between age and ecologically conscious consumer behavior which is founded by McEvoy (1972) and Kinnear et al. (1974). In conclusion, the relationship between age and environmental sensitivity is still very uncertain (Bui, 2005).

#### (b) Gender

Men and women are totally different in the aspect of environmental sensitivity (Brown & Harris, 1992; Tikka et al., 2000). As compared to men, women are more concern about the environmental issues (Berkowitz &

Lutterman, 1968; Webster, 1975; Stern et al., 1993; Banerjee & McKeage, 1994; Laroche et al., 2001; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003); hence they will consider the impact of their action to the environment and other consumers (Eagly, 1987). Majority of the green consumers are women (Ottman & Reilly, 1998; Memery, Megicks & Williams, 2005; do Pa? o, Raposo & Filho, 2009), and they are more likely to engage in the pro-environmental behavior such as consumption of green products and recycling (Straughan & Roberts, 1999; Zelezny, Chua & Aldrich, 2000; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003). The willingness of the consumers to pay for green products based on the gender factor is proven statistically significant by the studies of Laroche, Bergeron and Barbaro-Forleo (2001).

However, there are no significant differences between men and women in joining and participating in the green community (Mainieri & Barnett, 1997). According to MacDonald and Hara (1994), the relationship between gender and environmental sensitivity is significant but in the opposite of the predicted relationship, which means that men are more concern about the environmental issues. For example, men are willing to pay more in order to solve the air pollution problems (Reizenstein et al., 1974). Samdahl and Robertson (1989) and Brooker (1976) stated that the relationship between gender and environmentally conscious consumer behavior is insignificant. In conclusion, the relationship between gender and environmental sensitivity is still questionable (Bui, 2005).

(c) Education

Education level is the important determinant that can influence the environmental attitudes or ecological conscious consumer behavior (Kinneer et al., 1974; Samdahl & Robertson, 1989; Roberts, 1995; Newell & Green, 1997; Bourne, 1998). Majority of the green consumers are highly educated (Tilikidou & Delistavrou, 2008). It is because they access more information and hence, more sensitive towards the environment issues and acting in an ecological favorable way (Chan, 1996; do Pa? o & Raposo, 2009). The relationship between education and environmental sensitivity is positive as predicted by Balderjahn (1988); Roberts (1996); Chan (1996) and Tilikidou (2007). However, Mainieri et al. (1997) and Diamantopoulos et al. (2003) stated that there is no significant relationship exists between these two variables. As compared to other demographic variables, education is the most consistent predictor in explaining environmental conscious consumer behavior (Straughan & Roberts, 1999). It is because most of the previous studies had proven that education and environmental conscious consumer behavior are positively correlated (Cleveland et al., 2005).

#### (d) Income

Consumers with medium or high income levels are more likely to be result in the pro-environmental purchasing behaviors (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968; Henion, 1972), because they are affordable to pay more for the non-polluting products which are more expensive than conventional products (Straughan & Roberts, 1999). This means that green product purchasing decision is based on the consumers income level (Balderjahn, 1988; Chan, 1996; Tilikidou, 2007). Positive relationship exists between income and environmental attitudes (Kinneer et al., 1974; McEvoy, 1972; Roper, 1990; <https://assignbuster.com/degree-of-commitment-to-the-environment-marketing-essay/>



Zimmer et al., 1994; Chan, 1999). But, Roberts (1996) and Samdahl and Robertson (1989) had argue that the relationship is negatively correlated. According to Antil (1978); Van Liere and Dunlap (1981) and Kassarian (1971), there is no significant relationship exists between income and environmental concern.

From the review of the demographic profiles, it is found out that the environmental conscious consumers are more likely to be highly educated, higher income than the average, and women who are in the 30-44 years old.

### 2. 3. 3 Environmental knowledge

Knowledge is a fundamental element in the function of the society and become more objective as compared to last time (Laroche et al, 2001). Besides, knowledge can be considered the most powerful tool which can change the world (Sabah et al, 2003). Environmental knowledge refers to the amount of information that an individual know which is related to the environmental problems (Chan, 1999). Marketing researchers has been recognized environmental knowledge as a variable that influences the consumer in the purchase decision-making process, which means that consumer will make wrong decision if he or she receive the wrong information (Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001; do Pa? o & Raposo, 2009). According to Laroche et al. (2001), knowledge affects consumers in the ways of gathering and organizing information (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987), influences them in the decision-making process (Brucks, 1985) and how to evaluate the particular products or services (Murray & Schalacter, 1990).

According to Schahn and Holzer (1990), there are two types of knowledge which include factual knowledge and action-related knowledge. Factual knowledge refer to the knowledge about definition, causes and the effects of the environmental issues, while action-related knowledge refer to the knowledge about the action that cause the environmental issues and more likely to influence the environmental behavior (Tanner & Kast, 2003). Objective knowledge and subjective knowledge are the two major approaches that used to measure the level of knowledge (Dodd et al., 2005). Objective knowledge refers to how much a person actually knows and subjective knowledge refers to how much a person thinks he or she knows, or self-assessed knowledge (Barber, Taylor & Strick, 2009, p. 2). Barber, Taylor and Strick (2009) stated that although it is difficult to measure the knowledge level, but consumers that have more knowledge about the environmental issues will more likely to be result in the pro-environmental behaviors as compared to the consumers that are lack of environmental knowledge.

Environmental knowledge is a significant moderator for the sustainable development and used to understand the environmental problems (Wahab, Raheem & Hutchinson, 2003). In addition, environmental knowledge is a significant predictor for the pro-environmental behavior (Vining and Ebreo, 1990; Chan, 1999; Bazoche et al., 2008; Loureiro, 2003) and environmental sensitivity (Bourne, 1998). The more environmental knowledge an individual knows; the more willingness for him or her to pay a price premium for the environmental-friendly products (Amyx et al., 1994; Mark et al, 2005). It is because they want to protect the environment and support the sustainable

development (Calare, Mehdi & Peter, 2006). Knowledge about the green products and environmental issues should be enhanced by the companies that adopt the green marketing approach in order to promote the green products more effectively (Brown, 1996). But Laroche et al. (2001) stated that environmental knowledge is not significant in predicting the consumers willingness to pay for different green products. Maloney and Ward (1973) found out that there is no significant relationship between environmental knowledge and ecological conscious consumer behavior. Martin and Simintiras (1995) reported that the relationship between these two variables is still very uncertain and contradictory. The pro-environmental purchasing behavior of the consumers might reduce if he or she has more knowledge about the environmental problems, because they are aware of the shortcomings (Getzner & Grabner-Kr? uter, 2004).

#### 2. 3. 4 Environmental concern

Environmental concern is also known as ecological concern. According to Chan and Lau (2004), there is no specific definition for environmental concern due to its complicated and unstable concept. Crosby et al. (1981) defines it as having a strong attitude for preserving the environment. Consumers who are sensitive to the environmental issues believe that the environmental problems are getting more serious and need to solve it, while consumers who are less sensitive to the environmental issues believe that environmental problems will be solve by themselves without the help of the human beings (Laroche et al., 2002). Gill et al. (1986) stated that environmental concern is a general attitude that has indirect influence on the behavior. Maloney et al. (1975) describe that environmental concern is <https://assignbuster.com/degree-of-commitment-to-the-environment-marketing-essay/>

related to the degree of emotionality, level of knowledge and readiness to change behavior. Environmental concern consists of three components which include cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral (Schlegelmilch, Bohlen & Diamantopoulos, 1996). The higher a person's cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral intention, the higher the actual level of commitment to the environment (Kinneer & Taylor, 1973). Attitude is a mediator to the environmental concern and environmental concern has an impact on the intention to involve in the pro-environmental behavior (Taylor & Todd, 1995). According to Lee (2008), environmental concern is the second predictor for the pro-environmental purchasing behavior which is right after the social influence. In conclusion, environmental concern can be defined as the awareness of a person about the environmental problems, his or her support attempts for solving them or the level of his or her willingness for contributing such attempts (Albayrak, Caber & Aksoy, 2010, p. 84).

The study of environmental concern has been conducted in a wide range, ranging from psychology (Arbuthnot & Lingg, 1975; Stone et al., 1995; Steurer, 1998), sociology (Buttel & Flinn, 1978; Macnaghten & Urry, 1995), marketing (Peattie & Charter, 1994; Kilbourne et al., 1997; Ling-yee, 1997) to environmental studies (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978; Vining & Ebreo, 1990; Widegren, 1998). According to Antil (1984), Van Liere and Dunlap (1981), Roberts and Bacon (1997) and Kim and Choi (2005), there is a positive relationship between environmental concern and environmental friendly behavior. In the study of Bang et al. (2000), they found out that the more concerned an individual towards the environment, the more willingness for him or her to pay a price premium for renewable energy. In short,

environmental concern has an influence on the pro-environmental behaviors such as consumption of non-polluting products, recycle and energy saving (Bamberg, 2003). In order to become the green consumer, an individual must understand the consequences of their behavior on the environment (Bohlen et al., 1993). However, Johri and Sahasakmontri (1998) reported that the purchase decision of the consumers do not based solely on the level of environmental concern. They will consider the product attributes such as price, convenience, quality and availability before the purchase decision (Gan et al., 2008).

Consumers can be categorized into different group based on their environmental concern level (?? ypa, 2006). The level of environmental concern will influence the consumers environmental-friendly behavior and demand for the green products (?? ypa, 2006). The explanations for different type of the consumers according to their level of environmental concern are listed in the Table 1.

Table 1: Consumer classification according to the level of environmental concern.

#### Type Description

1) True-blue greens Refer to the group of consumers which high environmental sensitivity and can be considered as the leaders for the green market movement. They will not buy the products that lead to the environmental problems. Consumers that belong to this group have more education and earn more than the average income.

2) Green-back greens Refer to the group of consumers which are more willing than the average consumer to purchase environmental-friendly products. But their behavior patterns have not changed as much as compared to true-blue greens. It is because they are busy and no time to change their consumption patterns to the environmental-friendly ways.

3) Sprouts Refer to the group of consumers which believe in the theory that eco-friendly products can reduce the negative environmental effect, but they do not buy the products. Sprouts seldom buy the green product if more costly, but they can be persuaded to buy green if appealed to appropriately. In other words, they are just started to adopt the environmental-friendly approach.

4) Grousers Refer to the group of consumers which believe that environmental-friendly products are more expensive as compared to the competitors and solving the environmental issues are company responsibilities

5) Basic browns Refer to the group of consumers which concern about their daily life instead of environmental and social issue. They do not think that their individual efforts will help to solve the environmental issue. Besides, they are the consumers who are lack of knowledge and have the lowest incomes as compared to others.

Sources: Ginsberg and Bloom (2004), Minton and Rose (1997), Vlosky et al. (1999)

2. 3. 5 Environmental-friendly product attributes

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Attribute refer to the characteristics or features of a product or service that appeal to the customers and satisfy their needs or demands (Loudon & Bitta, 1993). According to Cheron, Hayashi and Sugimoto (1999), the attributes of a product before the consumer purchasing decision include quality, price, brand name, popularity and country of manufacture. Attributes can be divided into two types, (I) intrinsic cues which refer to the physical features of the particular product and objective such as taste and color and (II) extrinsic cues which are not the part of physical product itself and subjective such as brand name and price (Olson & Jacoby, 1972; Olson, 1977; Lefkoff-Hagius & Mason, 1990). Intrinsic cues play an important role in the consumer purchase decisions when there is no much difference in the extrinsic cues (Lefkoff-Hagius & Mason, 1990). Green product attributes possess the features of basic, economy, technology, environment, resource, energy and society, whereas the conventional product attributes possess the features of basic and economy only (Wen, 2008). Environmental-friendly product attributes can be described that the product is produced in the environmental-friendly ways by using the natural or renewable resources and biodegradable packaging (Meffert & Kirchgeorg, 1993; Peattie, 1995).

Previous researchers had neglected the importance of product attributes in the consumer pro-environmental purchase behavior, thus there are very little evidence reported the relationship between these two variables (Gan et al., 2008). The study of Roozen and De Pelsmacker (1998) found out that the relationship between the products attributes and consumer green purchase behavior is very useful in understanding how the consumers evaluate the green products. This means that product attributes is very important in order

to help marketers satisfied the consumers needs, wants and demands after understand their behavior (Gan et al., 2008).

Consumers buy green products because they want to improve and preserve the environment. The study on the sample of consumers from Hong Kong and Australia found out that consumers are willing to pay more for the products that were not tested on animals (Auger et al., 2008). In some cases, direct personal benefits can be obtained which include improve the health and nutrition by consuming the organic foods, energy efficiency and lighting budgets (Hartmann & Ibez, 2006). However, according to HMida, Chavez and Guindon (n. d.), consumers will only willing to pay a price premium for the green products if the products features and companys environmental reputation are worthy for them. Besides, Yam-Tang and Chan (1998) reported that majority of the consumers will not trade-off the product attributes for a better environment. Only those consumers that have high environmental sensitivity and responsibility for the environment will purchase green products regardless of the products qualities and price (Schlegelmilch, Bohlen & Diamantopoulos, 1996). Rao and Bergen (1992) stated that consumers are only willing to pay a price premium for the green products if the products are in the good qualities.

Environmental attributes of a particular product are difficult for the consumers to access as compared to other products attributes which are easier to observe (Wessells et al., 1999). One of the barriers for pro-environmental purchase decision is due to the difficulty to identify and locate the environmental-friendly products (Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, 2002). The environmental labeling or eco-labeling <https://assignbuster.com/degree-of-commitment-to-the-environment-marketing-essay/>



has been introduced in order to solve the problem. An eco-label provides customers the information about the green products and also addressing the environmental issues (Gan et al., 2008). An eco-label is a mark which verified the products based on the environmental criteria such as Environmentally Degradable, Non-toxic Plastic Packaging Material, Hazardous Metal-Free Electrical and Electronic Equipment, Biodegradable Cleaning Agents and Recycled Paper (Ramli, 2009). Childs and Whiting (1998) stated that eco-label is an indicator for the products environmental performance in order to prevent consumers from being confuse over the claims of environmental friendliness. But some consumers do not understand the environmental-friendly labels attached to the products (Kangun & Polonsky, 1995). The studies of Bigsby and Ozanne (2002), Vlosky et al. (1999) and Ottman (1992) found out that consumers are willing to pay more for the green labeled products. But Wessells et al. (1999) suggested that environmental labeling is not the effective tools to motivate the consumers response towards the environment. There is a weak correlation between environmental concern and eco-labeling (Magnusson et al., 2001). Some companies will over-claim the ecological responsibility or giving the wrong information in order to get the profit maximization (Cary, Bhaskaran & Polonsky, 2004). As a result, some consumers might think that eco-label are lack of credibility and do not rely the information attached to the green products during the purchase decisions (DSouza et al., 2006; Glegg et al., 2005).