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## **Millennials’ Green Marketing Interpretation, Awareness, Perceived Value and Purchase Behavior**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study sought to determine the millennials’ interpretation, awareness, perceived value and purchase behavior of green marketing products. It included 100 respondents which were drawn through random sampling from people considered as millennials. The awareness was measured in terms of general awareness, product knowledge and information source while the perceived value was measured in terms of functional value, social value, conditional value and environmental value. The findings showed that awareness and perceived value both have significant and positive effects on the purchase behavior of the respondents. Hence, it is recommended that efforts on increasing the awareness be emphasized and value of green products be highlighted by companies and marketers.*

**KEYWORDS:** *green marketing, millennials, awareness, perceived value, purchase behavior, sustainability*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The proliferation and degradation of environment has become one of the main thrusts of every sector including business. The call towards sustainable development has been immensely growing due to the dilemma brought about by this proliferation. Nowadays, businesses have made environmental protection as an integral part of their thrusts and strategies. In the field of marketing, the endeavor towards going green has been constantly growing as well. Consumers are now more privy to the products that they purchase and use, and are more concerned towards its effect in the environment. With this, marketing strategies are also geared towards the green direction. However, not all businesses and even consumers are made aware of the idea and value of green marketing (Chen, 2013). Moreover, there is also a recognized need of harmonizing the understanding of the consumers and businesses so that such establishments would gear their green marketing efforts in relation to their consumers’ perspectives.

Because of the resurfacing of environmental concerns as the main issues for media and green marketing research field, marketing managers, academics, and firms have been expected to look for factors that might encourage or motivate consumers to buy green products (Chekima, Chekima, Khalid Wafa, Aisat Igau, & Sondoh, 2016). However, there is inadequate information on how to promote consumers’ green behavioral intentions, which slows down the growth of green markets and is considered a barrier for firms when trying to develop new segments and communicating these kind of products (Chekima, Chekima, Khalid Wafa, Aisat Igau, & Sondoh, 2016), especially in the developing countries (Biswas & Roy, 2015). One of the reasons is the lack of information to the consumers about green products which

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often results in an attitude-behavior gap between their environmental concern and actual buying behavior thus hindering the market share for green products (Biswas & Roy, 2015).

On the other hand, the millennials are a group of market which is considered to be the largest generation ever. Owing to factors like their massive number, their attitude and buying behavior, and the rampant use of technology; this segment of the market is changing the way businesses and marketing is being done as well. Smith (2014) emphasized that they are considered to be one of the most highly educated when it comes to the importance of ecological and environmental conditions; hence, they are seeking brands that are regarded as making positive effect on the environment.

Considering the growing importance of green segment in the market, it is important to look at what factors influence the consumer's selection process. On the other hand, there is also a known ambiguity of the term "green" as there is confusion between the consumers and the marketers about the said term. This study will be significant to the business sector, particularly those highly involved in green marketing as it will give information and reference on how this particular market segment understands and perceives green marketing and how it affects their buying behavior, which can be utilized in framing their marketing strategy.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study aimed to attain the following objectives:

1. Find out the interpretation of the millennials on the term "green marketing"
2. Determine the extent of awareness of the millennials on green marketing
3. Identify how the millennials perceive green marketing in terms of value
4. Determine the millennials purchase behavior in terms of green marketing
5. Find out if millennials extent of awareness and perceived value on green marketing affect their purchase behavior in terms of green marketing

## **HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **Green Marketing**

There has been a growing interest among top managers, stakeholders and academics in the adherence of the triple-bottom line particularly on the green marketing aspect as firms realize that they are members of the wider community and must behave in an environmentally responsible manner (Mishra & Sharma, 2012; Cronin, Smith, Gleim, Ramirez, & Martinez, 2011). This identified interest is due to issues being attached in response to the call for sustainability like global warming and the proliferation of serious environmental problems which has required firms to engage in greater social responsibility (Yang, Zhao, Lou, & Wei, 2013; Mishra & Sharma, 2012); with every person, regardless of status, interested in quality of life (Mishra & Sharma, 2012). As a result, firms are now adopting environmental issues into their corporate culture and integrate strategies in relation to this (Mishra & Sharma, 2012).

With the growing concern for environmental issues, customers are now more supportive to businesses that operate in an environment-friendly manner (Suresh, 2014; Bhatia & Jain, 2013; Mishra & Sharma, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2011). Therefore, Green Marketing should be

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considered as a significant approach to modern marketing and must be practiced with more vigor (Suresh, 2014) as integrating such not only provides organizations an opportunity to meet consumer expectations and address their environmental concerns, but also to gain a competitive advantage and a strong consumer base. (Bhatia & Jain, 2013). The concept of green marketing calls upon businesses to follow ethical and green practices while dealing with customers, suppliers, dealers, and employees.(Bhatia & Jain, 2013)

### **Green Marketing and Consumer Behavior**

It is now evident that people are interested in what companies are doing to help the environment and how their business operations impact the environment(Rawat & Garga, 2012). In fact, there is a growing trend in the type of consumer behavior which considers price and convenience as secondary factors for purchase decision, to give way to personal and societal concerns(Smith & Brower, 2012).

Bhatia and Jain (2013) found that there is high level of awareness about green marketing practices and products among consumers in India. They have also found green values to be high which has given good insights for marketers of the green products and suggested the need of designing the marketing communication campaigns promoting green products due to high green value among the consumers. Meanwhile, Suresh (2014) found that some of the parameters that would make green products more attractive to consumers are: affordable price and value from the product, satisfaction on green element, promotional offers with product, product in multiple variety, eco-friendly product and easy availability. He emphasized that green marketing is considered as an instrument to bring about societal and environmental changes.

In emerging economies like India, consumer awareness about green products is still at a nascent stage. Consumers lack awareness about green marketing and associate it with social responsibility initiatives. Khare, Mukerjee, and Goyal(2013)found that normative values, social influence, and group esteem affect consumers' green purchase behavior. These showed that these factors can help companies in creating awareness about green marketing and products and in turn making higher profits. Further, they found that consumers' knowledge about environmentally friendly products influences their decisions to purchase green products. Meanwhile, Nair and Ndubisi(2011)adhered that environmental marketing is influenced by commercial, social and ethical considerations and are also directly or indirectly instigated by stakeholder groups from within or outside the organization.

### **Awareness and Green Marketing Behavior**

Previous studies examining the consumer behavior especially when it comes to purchase intentions and behaviors have averred that there are several factors that may affect this behavior and one of which is their awareness and knowledge (Chekima, et.al , 2016). Studies also proved that consumers with high level of green consciousness are more willing to practice green consumption; thus recommending that increasing environmental awareness is an important factor (Wu & Chen, 2014). Other studies have also emphasized that consumers' knowledge about environmentally friendly products influences their decisions to purchase green products(Khare, Mukerjee, & Goyal, 2013) and there awareness to such creates positive effect on their green purchase behavior (Bhatia & Jain, 2013).

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### **Perceived Value and Green Marketing Behavior**

A number of studies showed that perceived value is considered to be a consumer's motivation in green marketing purchase behavior. Biswas and Roy (2015) in his study suggested that consumer choices are a function of his multiple consumption values, which include dimensions such as functional value, social value, environmental value, conditional value, and knowledge value. Wu and Chen (2014) also proved that perceived benefit which is defined as the consumer's perceived value on green consumption is significantly and positively related to consumer attitudes, which in turn affects their purchase intention and behavior. Meanwhile, Medeiros, Ribeiro, and Cortimiglia (2016) pointed out that value, as perceived by customers, has a direct relationship to their willingness to pay; and that as the perceived value increases, the less influential is the role of monetary costs in the buyers' purchasing decision and further, the respondents' willingness to pay increases when they value the green product. A study found specifically in Athens that green consumers collectively consider the environmental and economic benefits while choosing green products (Maniatis, 2015) while Bhatia and Jain (2013) found that overall green values, together with their awareness about green products and practices and the perception regarding seriousness of marketing companies towards green marketing had positive significant impact on consumer persuasion to buy and prefer green products over conventional products.

Based on the foregoing discussions, the following hypotheses are drawn:

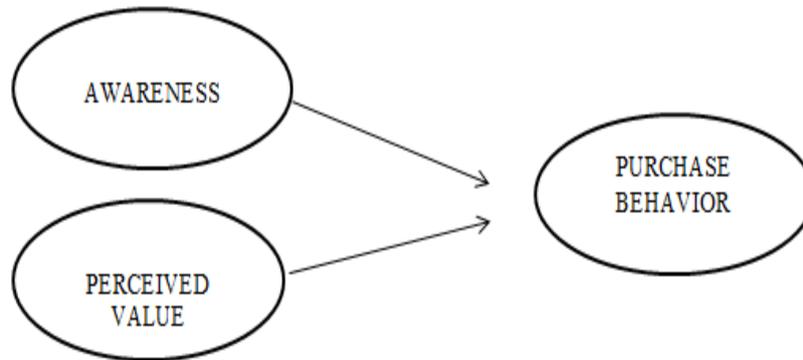
1. The millennials' awareness on green marketing is significant to their purchase behavior of green products
2. The millennials' perceived value of green marketing is significant to their purchase behavior of green products

### **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The study was anchored on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) which emphasized that behavioral intention is an important predictor of actual behavior, which is influenced by three factors, namely: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. As a general rule, the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm, and the higher is the perceived control, the stronger should be a person's intention to perform the said behavior. Based on the TPB, the study assumed that certain factors affect the purchasing behavior on green products of the millennials. Awareness is pointed out as an important factor in the consumers' purchase behavior (Chekima, et. al, 2016; Wu & Chen, 2014; Bhatia & Jain, 2013). This is anchored on the perceived behavioral control construct in which Wu and Chen (2014) discussed to be affected by control forces and beliefs and points out to the consumers' resources being sufficient to endure the success of performing green purchase behavior that includes his knowledge and awareness of such. Thus, in the present study, awareness is assumed to be one of the factors that may affect the millennials' green purchase behavior. Perceived value is also assumed to be a factor which may affect the purchase behavior (Medeiros, Ribeiro, & Cortimiglia, 2016; Biswas & Roy, 2015; Wu & Chen, 2014). This stems from the attitude and subjective norms constructs from the Theory of Planned Behavior, which Wu & Chen (2014) defined as the consumers' impression, feeling and

evaluation both affected by his own and others. Hence, perceived value is likewise assumed to be a factor which may affect the millennials' green purchase behavior.

The conceptual framework is illustrated as follows:



**Fig. 1** Proposed Framework on Buyers' Behavior on Green Marketing

## METHODOLOGY

The study used causal research design as it aimed at finding out the effect of awareness and perceived value of the millennials to their purchase behavior. 100 respondents who are considered millennials were selected as respondents through random sampling. A survey questionnaire which was adapted from various studies was utilized in data gathering. The data gathered was analyzed using Multiple Linear Regression. The constructs, dimensions and measures used in the study were constructed as follows, based on the existing related literature:

**Table 1. Variables used in the Study**

Constructs	Dimensions	Source
Awareness	General Consumer Knowledge	(Makanyete, 2015; Wu & Chen, 2014; Bhatia & Jain, 2013)
	Product Knowledge	(Makanyete, 2015; Wu & Chen, 2014)
	Information Source	(Makanyete, 2015)
Perceived Value	Functional Value	(Biswas & Roy, 2015)
	Social Value	(Biswas & Roy, 2015)
	Conditional Value	(Biswas & Roy, 2015)
	Environmental Value	(Biswas & Roy, 2015)
Purchase Behavior		(Lai & Cheng, 2015)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 4. Millennials' Interpretation on Green Marketing Products**

	Term	Responses
<b>Most Effective</b>	Eco-friendly	72
	Biodegradable	46
	Organic	40
<b>Mildly Effective</b>	Recycled	37
	Nature-friendly	32
<b>Not Effective</b>	Natural	24
	Sustainable	20
	Green	8

Basing on the study of Smith (2014), the 8 identified terms which are found to be usually related to the concept were grouped into 3 tiers depending on the number of responses garnered on the millennials' interpretation as to what they think is most associated with environmentally preferable product. The three tiers included "mostly effective", mildly effective" and "not effective, based on the ranking of the responses. Table 4 shows that from among the terms usually attached to environmentally preferable product, "eco-friendly, "biodegradable" and organic" are the most effective since most millennials associate the terms with it. "Recycled" and "nature friendly" were among the mildly effective term associated with the concept, and "natural", "sustainable", and "green" are considered to be not effective in terms of its association with the concept. The results are in accordance with that of Smith (2014) which also showed that "eco-friendly" is the term mostly associated with environmentally preferable products; and "sustainable" being one of the least associated terms with the concept. This also implies that the term "green" itself is not an effective means and may provide an ambiguity in the understanding of the millennials on the concept of the product. It further implies that if companies and marketers would want to increase awareness and advertise their environmentally preferable products, the terms "eco-friendly", "biodegradable" and "organic" can be most effective in communicating with them.

**Table 5. Respondents' Awareness of Green Marketing**

	General Awareness	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1. I have sufficient information on green marketing practices and products		3.44	.78
2. I am aware of the potential environmental impact of my actions when making purchase decisions		3.98	.81
3. I can decide whether to purchase environment friendly products or not by myself		4.02	.84
Product Knowledge			
1. I keep watch on the media for products that are considered green.		3.36	.95
2. I can tell the differences between environmental products and ordinary products		3.55	.86
3. Before purchasing a particular product, I usually compare various brands to choose the best		4.05	1.03

<b>Information Source</b>		
1. I always consult media ads for information before buying green products	3.26	.99
2. Seeking information from relatives and friends prior to making a final choice is always a good idea	3.59	.9
3. Sales staff can be an important source of product information	3.72	.85

Table 5 shows the responses of the respondents in terms of their awareness on green marketing based on general awareness, product knowledge and information source dimensions. . With a weighted mean of 3.88, the data revealed that the millennials somewhat agree that they have the general awareness about the green products. In terms of product knowledge, the respondents mostly agreed that before purchasing, they usually compare various brands before they choose the best. With a weighted mean 3.65, the respondents showed that they somewhat agree that they have the knowledge in terms of the green products itself. In terms of the information source, they have mostly agreed that sales staff can be an important source of product information, and with a weighted mean of 3.52, the respondents showed that they somewhat agree that they have information source about green marketing. From among the three dimensions, the respondents' general awareness was rated the highest by the respondents which shows that they mostly agree that they have general awareness on green marketing.

**Table 6. Respondents' Perceived Value on Green Marketing**

<b>Functional Value</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
1. Environment friendly products are good products for the price.	3.65	.92
2. Environment friendly products are economical for the attributes they offer.	3.7	.83
3. Eco-friendly products have an expectable standard quality	3.78	.78
4. Eco-friendly products are made from non-hazardous substances	4.1	.82
<b>Social Value</b>		
1. Purchase of eco-friendly products will help me gain social approval	3.44	2.08
2. Purchase of eco-friendly products will make a positive impression on peer groups.	3.4	.93
3. I would buy eco-friendly products on peers' suggestions or preference to buy them.	3.5	.89
4. Green product would improve the way I am perceived.	3.39	.85
<b>Conditional Value</b>		
1. I would purchase eco-friendly products over conventional substitutes if offered at a discount or with other promotional incentives	3.73	.97
2. I would purchase eco-friendly products over conventional substitutes if offered at subsidized rate.	3.64	.91
3. I would buy eco-friendly products when they are easily acquirable at proximity.	3.79	.89
4. I would purchase eco-friendly products over conventional substitutes under unsustainable environmental conditions.	3.49	.96

<b>Environmental Value</b>		
1. The presence of resource shortage and environmental pollution has threatened life on earth.	4.45	.87
2. The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset.	4.23	.81
3. We are approaching the limit the earth can sustain.	4.17	.91
4. If things continue in the present course, the sustainability of the environment and future generations are highly threatened	4.39	.85

Table 6 presents the respondents' responses on their perceived values in terms of functional value, social value, conditional value, and environmental value. The data show that in terms of the functional value, they mostly agreed that eco-friendly products are made from non-hazardous substances. With a weighted mean of 3.81, respondents showed that they somewhat agree of the functional value of green products. In terms of social value, the data showed that respondents mostly value peer's suggestion or preference to buy the green products. With a weighted mean of 3.56, the millennials somewhat agree that green marketing has a social value. In terms of the conditional value, most respondents agreed that they would tend to buy eco-friendly products when it is easily acquirable at proximity. With a weighted mean of 3.66, the respondents somewhat agree that green marketing has certain conditional values. In terms of environmental value, most of the respondents agreed that the presence of resource shortage and environmental pollution has threatened life on earth. With a weighted mean of 4.31, the data showed that millennials strongly agree of the environmental value of purchasing green products. In terms of the overall perceived value, the respondents revealed that environmental value is the most agreed while social value is the least. This implies that most likely respondents would give higher value on the environmental concerns regarding the green products and would most likely be least concerned with the social value of it.

**Table 7. Respondents' Purchase Behavior on Green Marketing**

<b>Purchase Behavior</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
1. I often buy products that use recycled/recyclable packaging	3.63	.86
2. I often buy products that contain no or fewer chemical ingredients	3.6	.93
3. When I go shopping, I will look for products with certified environmentally-safe or organic stamp	3.3	.94
4. I often buy products that support fair community trades	3.58	.90
5. I often buy products that are against animal-testing	3.53	.88
6. I often buy products that are labeled as environmentally safe	3.79	.94
7. I often buy organic products	3.32	.86

Table 7 shows the respondents responses on their purchase behavior of green products. The data revealed that from among the seven parameters of purchase behavior, they mostly agreed that they often buy products that are labeled as environmentally safe; while looking for products with certified environmentally safe or organic stamp is the least observed by the respondents. This result implies that labeling of the product as environmentally safe is one of

the most observed behaviors when they purchase green products; while they least likely observe considering the presence stamps in green products.

**Table 8. Awareness, Perceived Value and Purchase Behavior**

Variable	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Awareness	3.66	.58
Perceived Value	3.79	.51
Purchase Behavior	3.54	.75

Table 8 shows the overall weighted mean of the respondents on the awareness, perceived value and purchase behavior. The data shows that the respondents rated their awareness of green products in terms of the 3 dimensions at 3.66 which means that they somewhat agree that they are aware green marketing. Perceived value was rated by the respondents 3.79 which imply that they also somewhat agree of their perceived value of the green marketing. The respondents also responded that they somewhat agree that they observe purchasing green products.

**Table 9. Linear Regression on Purchase Behavior and Awareness and Perceived Value**

Independent Variables	Coefficients	P-Values
Awareness	.67	0.00**
Perceived Value	.28	0.05*

Note: \* $<.05$ , \*\* $<.01$

Table 9 shows the result of the linear regression on purchase behavior and the respondents' awareness and perceived value on green marketing. The result showed that both the awareness and perceived value are significant to the purchase behavior. It further showed that for every increase in the awareness of the respondents, there is a corresponding .67 increase in the purchase behavior and for every increase in the perceived value of the respondents, there is a corresponding increase of .28. These results therefore accept the hypotheses presented and accept that both the awareness and the perceived value have an effect on the green purchase behavior of the respondents. The result agrees with the findings of (Chekima, et. al, 2016; Wu & Chen, 2014; Bhatia & Jain, 2013; Khare, et. al, 2013) which all agreed that higher level of awareness and knowledge about environmental friendly products is an important indicator if their purchase behavior. The study also conforms to that of (Medeiros, Ribeiro, & Cortimiglia, 2016; Maniatis, 2015; Biswas & Roy, 2015; Wu & Chen, 2014; Bhatia & Jain, 2013) which all agreed that how the consumers value the environmental friendly products leads to the consumers purchase behavior of these products. The positive result indicates that increase in both the awareness and perceived value would also likely increase the tendency of the consumers to purchase these kinds of products.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study sought to determine the millennials' interpretation, awareness, perceived value and purchase behavior of green marketing. The awareness was measured in terms of general awareness, product knowledge and information source while the perceived value was

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measured in terms of functional value, social value, conditional value and environmental value. The results showed that the respondents mostly associate the concept of green marketing with “eco-friendly”, biodegradable” and “organic”; which implies that these terms most likely would be the most effective way of communicating with the respondents about their green products. In relation to this, it is recommended that the companies offering green products should be able to communicate with this particular market segment, using these terms they most likely associate the green products with, to avoid confusion and ambiguity of the concept. Pickett-Baker and Ozaki(2008) adhered that the use of effective communication and advertising strategies are helpful not just in informing the consumers but in influencing them to purchase the products as well.

In terms of the respondents’ awareness about the green products, the results showed that they somewhat agree that they are aware of such products and was further found that the general awareness is the highest indicator of their awareness. This implies that they have sufficient information about green marketing. However, it also showed that the respondents are not so keen in looking for information about these kinds of products through media outlets. Hence, it is recommended that the marketers and companies offering green products should also be able to design and utilize other channels of communication in informing and promoting such products.

The respondents also responded that they somewhat agree in terms of their perceived value of green products. Among the 4 dimensions, the environmental value of green products showed as the highest to be rated by the respondents. This implies that the respondents would most likely purchase green products because of their perceived value on the environmental impact of such products. Therefore, in order to encourage the millennials to increase their purchase behavior on green products, the environmental benefit of these products should be emphasized in advertising and promoting the products, as well as in the awareness campaigns of such.

The linear regression showed that awareness and perceived value both have significant and positive effects on the purchase behavior of the respondents. Hence, it is recommended that efforts on increasing the awareness be emphasized by companies and marketers so that the green products will have an increased market range. The environmental values and not much on the social value of the green products should also be highlighted both in awareness and promotional activities of the companies.

Lastly, the studies also come with limitations; one of which is on the scope and number of respondents involved in the study. In order to capture a wider scope of the millennials, the scope and number of respondents should be increased. Another limitation is on the other factors that can be considered in terms of the purchase behavior of green products. Aside from awareness and values, other variables may be included in the study to further capture the purchase behavior of the millennials.

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