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Green Marketing Model: Empirical Evidence from Green Consumers in Phetchabun, Thailand

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the key factors affecting the green attitude and green behavior of green consumers in Phetchabun Province, Thailand (those who purchase green products). Data were collected from 400 participants using a structured questionnaire surveying nine key factors. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis using the stepwise method were employed. The results indicate that reference group, social media, and price have a positive and significant effect on green attitudes. This study proposes a green marketing model based on the four key factors affecting green attitude and green behavior, namely, the price and promotional components of the marketing mix, social media, and reference group. Marketers and entrepreneurs should focus on these four factors in formulated competitive strategies, most notably communication on a variety of social media platforms and interaction with the reference groups of targeted consumers.

Keywords Green Marketing Model, Green Attitude, Green Behavior, Green Consumers

1. Introduction

The world is seeing a growing awareness of environmental issues as floods are becoming wetter, droughts drier, and hurricanes fiercer as a result of climate change. The need to link economic growth to environmental sustainability is becoming clear as more severe natural calamities may be the 'new' normal and mark the end of 'normal' times (Surya & Hajamohideen, 2018). So is the need for people to change their attitudes and the way they live (Tejeswari, 2016). The concept of sustainable development is gaining currency among people all over the world. Its emphasis is on the necessity for all sectors of the economy to promote environmental protection (Sandu, 2014). This is prompting governments to adopt policies that focus on minimizing the negative impact of human activities on the environment while also finding solutions for managing social problems (Kianpour, Anvari, Jusoh & Othman, 2014; Sehgal, 2017). Although a late mover, Thailand is developing such policies meant to encourage business organizations to become greener (Mahmoud, 2018). For instance, starting in 2020, plastic bags, a major source of pollution, will be banned and retailers prohibited from using them. Non-disposable reusable bags are slowly becoming the norm and enhancing the well-being of Thai people. Additional, and sometimes more controversial measures, such as the future ban of toxic fertilizers, are expected to be passed in the coming years as part of making the economy more sustainable and limiting the impact of global warming. There has also been action at the provincial level. One such provincial entity taking action is Phetchabun Province. The Phetchabun provincial government is seeking to promote green agricultural products as well as industrial operations that focus on consumer safety while minimizing the negative impact on the environment. This has translated among others into the establishment of the Phetchabun green market, farmers' markets and a healthcare and safety food exhibition and the promotion of no pesticide programs in agricultural zones.

All these measures, whether at the national or provincial level, reflect consumers' concerns with global warming, pollution, and food contamination. They also reflect consumers' demand for new products that are less impactful and more eco-friendly. Such products are known as 'green' products (Abzari, Shad, Sharbiyani, & Morad, 2013). Using green products is a significant step toward effectively addressing environmental problems (Kaur & Bhatia, 2018). For one thing, green consumption highlights one's environmental responsibilities with regard to the purchase, use, and disposal of products and services (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). This is one of the main reasons green products have become a key group of items, which an increasing number of consumers prefer to purchase (Siddique & Hossain, 2018; Yeng & Yazdanifard, 2015). There is evidence that consumers are willing to pay higher prices for products and services that are environmentally friendly (Abzari et al., 2013; Hossain & Khan, 2018). Manufacturing green products in response to the growing demand for environmental-friendly products can therefore be an important source of competitive advantage as businesses going greener will become more trusted in the marketplace and more attractive to the growing group of customers valuing environmental performance (Kane, 2011).

This can convince consumers to believe in the good things that companies do for society and the environment (Agarwal & Ganesh, 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2012). For all these reasons, an increasing number of companies and entrepreneurs are now turning to green products. It is therefore vital for strategic planning purposes to understand the key factors that influence consumers' green attitudes and green behavior. This empirical study seeks to do just that. Focusing on consumers in Phetchabun Province who buys green products, it aims to examine some key factors affecting green attitudes and green behavior among those consumers (as we just saw, this province is developing a good green track record and thus lends itself to this study). More specifically, this paper seeks to investigate the effects of three key factors (marketing mix, social influence, and demographics) on green attitudes and green behavior, respectively, and to propose a green marketing model for green business management.

2. Literature review

- *Green Marketing Mix*

As an extension of the marketing mix, the green marketing mix also consists of the 4Ps, product, price, place, and promotion. The marketing mix is at the core of the business process of any organization and is critical to build the competitive advantage of an organization (Misra, 2015). For instance, key product attributes such as quality will influence consumers' satisfaction and decision-making process (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). The green marketing mix affects consumer purchase intention as well (Mahmoud, 2018). But while green promotional activities influence consumers' green buying decisions, green price has been shown not to affect purchase decisions (Hossain & Khan, 2018). A number of studies have concluded that the green marketing mix also corporate market shares (Abzari et al., 2013; Agarwal & Ganesh, 2016; Manjunath & Manjunath, 2013; Sharma & Trivedi, 2016). Many organizations use green marketing strategies to support their organizational plans to focus on environmental issues intervention (Abzari et al., 2013; Mahmoud, 2018; Sandu, 2014). Previous studies have determined that green promotional activities such as environmental advertising could affect the green product awareness of targeted consumers (Siddique & Hossain, 2018; Yeng & Yazdanifard, 2015). Eco-label products and environmental advertising have a positive effect on green purchase intention (Yeng & Yazdanifard, 2015).

Not all studies, however, concur on these issues. For example, Rahbar and Wahid (2011) argued that environmental and green advertisements do not influence the purchase of green products. This may result from the low creditability of green advertisements among consumers. Geap, Govindan, and Bathmanathan (2018) also noted that the impact and benefit of green marketing requires time to develop.

- Social Influence

As one of the elements of the 'subjective norm' construct at the core of the Theory of Planned Behavior, social influence refers to the relationship between people in terms of their communication and sharing (Karunarathna, Naotunna, & Sachitra, 2017). Focusing on young and educated consumers, Karunarathna et al. (2017) found that social influence affected consumers' purchase behavior. Two key social influences are (i) reference groups and (ii) social media.

(i) *Reference Group*: A reference group is a group of people who give product and service information, suggest trials, and promote the use of products. Consumers who are unfamiliar with a product may not be interested in it or in purchasing it but may end up being persuaded into buying it by a reference group (Siddique & Hossain, 2018). A reference group is a critical factor in terms of impact on green product awareness. Like family and friends, reference groups can motivate consumers to purchase green products (Kianpour et al., 2014). Reference groups thus are an important source to mobilize target consumers, increase their green awareness, and motivate them to purchase green products.

(ii) *Social Media*: Today, social media is a key social influence and communication tool. The use of social media for green initiatives benefits business organizations by improving their understanding of consumers' needs and enhancing their relations with green customers. Likewise, social media is considered a key channel for consumers to become more familiar with green products and develop their awareness of green issues (Siddique & Hossain, 2018). Platforms such as green blogging can influence the adoption of green behavior (Abdollahbeigi & Salehi, 2019; Biswas, 2016; Biswas & Roy, 2014).

- Green Attitudes

Attitudes are used in predicting consumer behavior and the intention to act. Green attitude refers to a personal concern for social and environmental issues and a buying preference or a willingness to buy environmentally friendly products (Mobrezi & Khoshtinat, 2016; Trivedi, 2015). Organizations need to consider consumers' attitudes in order to design effective marketing programs to stimulate consumer purchase behavior (Kianpour et al., 2014; Tejeswari, 2016). Consumers' attitudes toward environmental issues can predict their green behavior (Tejeswari, 2016). Therefore, understanding consumers' green attitudes is very critical for green business planning (Trivedi, 2015). A positive attitude toward green products affects the willingness to buy green products (Mobrezi & Khoshtinat, 2016; Surya & Hajamohideen, 2018). Kaufmann, Panni, & Orphanidou (2012) concluded that green attitude affects green behavior.

- Green Behavior

Green behavior is defined as a behavior characterized by an awareness of social and environmental issues, search for, purchase, and use products with social and environmental benefits (Ottman, 2011; Siringi, 2012). Green product awareness also refers to the ability of consumers to identify products with environmental benefits (Siddique & Hossain, 2018). As a result, greener business will become more trusted in the market and attract more consumers who value environmental performance as a result (Kane, 2011). Advertising is an essential part of a green marketing strategy as it can motivate and influence consumers' purchase behavior (Geap et al., 2018). Marketers need to consider consumer behavioral aspects such as

personal, psychological, social, and cultural characteristics (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). The understanding of consumer behavior relating to green products has improved as environmental awareness among consumers has increased (Rahbar & Wahid, 2011). A number of studies have determined that personal factors like consumers' interests in environmental issues affect consumers' green purchasing behavior (Kaur & Bhatia, 2018; Sharma & Trivedi, 2016).

- Effect of the Marketing Mix and Social Influences on Green Attitudes

A number of previous studies have concluded that a green marketing mix can influence consumers' green attitudes. There is a positive relationship between marketing promotion and green attitudes (Agarwal & Ganesh, 2016). Advertising programs are an essential part of green marketing strategies and have the ability to change consumers' perception of green products (Geap et al., 2018). According to Chhay, Mian, and Suy (2015), price increases tend to be questioned by consumers. But as Hossain and Khan (2018) noted, consumers have a positive attitude when the green price is reasonable and the product satisfying. Hossain and Khan (2018) found that a reference group was a critical factor affecting green product awareness. Social media can also influence consumer attitudes related to environmental issues and eco-friendly products (Delcea, Cotfas, Trica, Cracium, & Molanescu, 2019). In summary, the green marketing mix, social media, green attitudes influenced green purchase intentions and the decision-making process (Agarwal & Ganesh, 2016; Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Kianpour et al., 2014; Manjunath & Manjunath, 2013; Sharma & Trivedi, 2016).

- Demographics

Trivedi (2015) found that demographics affect consumers' green attitudes. Demographic factors such as gender, age, education, and income have a significant correlation with the willingness to buy green products (Chhay et al., 2015). However, the influence of each of these factors on consumers' green behavior is uneven (Barge, More, & Bhola, 2014). All these factors are linked with to green behavior (Kaufmann et al., 2012).

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework developed for this research, which is based on the previous literature discussed above.

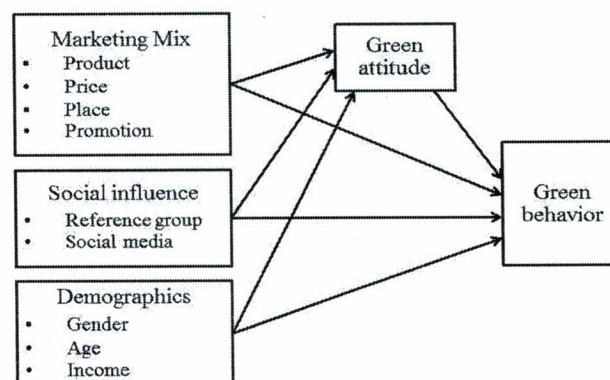


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

- Population

The population comprises green consumers in Phetchabun Province, Thailand, who purchase green products. 'Green consumers' in this research refer to individuals who purchase and use green products but are also concerned with and interested in environmental issues (FuiYeng & Yazdanifard, 2015; Nittala, 2014). The sample size was calculated using Cochran's

formula at a confidence level and error term of 95% and 5 %, respectively (Cochran, 1977). The sample size was 385. Cluster random sampling was used to collect data from 3 of the total of 11 districts in the Phetchabun area.

- Instrument

As shown in Table 1, the questionnaire comprises 9 key factors or variables. The 'purchase decision' variable uses the following 5-point scale (1 = rare purchase, 2 = not-much purchase, 3 = sometimes purchase, 4 = often purchase, and 5 = always purchase). Basic data are also collected (gender, age, educational level, and monthly income). For the other key variables, the study used a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree). To test the content validity, the questionnaire was checked by 3 experts and Item Objective Congruence (IOC) values calculated. The IOC average values for all items were found to be between 0.67-1.00. Therefore, the questionnaire was valid (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014). As indicated in Table 1, the reliability was acceptable since all variables were above 0.7 as determined by Cronbach's alpha statistics.

Table 1: Description of Key Research Variables

Variable	Source	Item	Cronbach Alpha
Product (PROD)	Manjunath G. and Manjunath, G. (2013), Siddique and Hossain (2018)	5	0.859
Price (PRICE)	Manjunath G. and Manjunath, G. (2013)	4	0.862
Place (PLACE)	Manjunath G. and Manjunath, G. (2013)	4	0.844
Promotion (PROMO)	Manjunath G. and Manjunath, G. (2013), Siddique and Hossain (2018)	4	0.928
Social media (MEDIA)	Delecea, Cotfas, Trica, Cracium, and Molanescu (2019), Siddique and Hossain (2018)	2	0.824
Reference groups (REFER)	Kianpour, Anvari, Jusoh, & Othman (2014), Siddique and Hossain (2018)	4	0.841
Green attitudes (ATTIT)	Mobrezi and Khoshtinat (2016)	4	0.872
Green behavior (BEHAV)	Siddique and Hossain (2018)	3	0.938

Statistical Testing

Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis with the stepwise method were employed in this study. Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the influence of the independent variables (marketing mix, social influence, demographics, and green attitude) on the dependent variable (green behavior). For the regression analysis, the following 3 equations were used:

$$ATTIT = \beta_1 + \beta_3PROD + \beta_4PRICE + \beta_5PLACE + \beta_6PROMO + \beta_7REFER + \beta_8MEDIA + \beta_9GEND + \beta_{10}AGE + \beta_{11}INCOM + \varepsilon \text{ ----- [1]}$$

$$BEHAV = \beta_2 + \beta_{12}ATTIT + \beta_{13}PROD + \beta_{14}PRICE + \beta_{15}PLACE + \beta_{16}PROMO + \beta_{17}REFER + \beta_{18}MEDIA + \beta_{19}GEND + \beta_{20}AGE + \beta_{21}INCOM + \varepsilon \text{ ----- [2]}$$

Where BEHAV = Green behavior, ATTIT = Green attitudes, PROD = Product, PRICE = Price, PLACE = Place, PROMO = Promotion, REFER = Reference group, MEDIA =

Social media, GEND = Gender, AGE = Age, INCOM = Income per month, β_i = constant (when $i = 1-2$), β_j = the regression coefficient (when $j = 3-21$), and ε = error term.

The key assumptions for the multiple regression analysis are: (i) normal distribution by checking the skewness and kurtosis of the research data, (ii) linearity by correlation analysis, and (iii) multicollinearity issue by correlation analysis, and variance inflation factor (VIF) values (Uyanik & Guler, 2013).

4. Results

- Descriptive Analysis

Tables 2-4 show the results of the descriptive analysis. Descriptive statistics and the correlation between the key variables were analyzed first so as to prove the critical conditions of the regression analysis, including normality and multicollinearity conditions. As Table 3 shows, female respondents were the biggest group (54.7%). Half of the respondents were unmarried. A majority of them had education below a bachelor degree (64.3). The age of respondents ranges from 18 to 65 years with an average age of 32.9 years. The average income of respondents was 12,646 Baht (USD 420) per month.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics across Districts

District	Frequency	Percent
Muang district	138	34.5
Lomsak district	149	37.3
Vichienburi district	113	28.3
Total	400	100.0

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents (n = 400)

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	219	54.7
	Male	181	45.3
Status	Single	200	50.0
	Married	195	48.7
	Divorced	5	1.3
Education	Below Bachelor's Degree	257	64.3
	Bachelor's Degree	135	33.7
	Above Bachelor's Degree	8	2.0

Table 4 shows the average means of all the key variables (Warmbrod, 2014). Most of them are high (3.56–3.92), most notably the marketing mix, social media, and green behavior. In the meantime, the means of reference group and green attitudes are at a medium level (3.29 and 3.39, respectively). This reflects the fact that respondents' opinions are high with regard to the marketing mix and green behavior but only medium in respect of green attitudes. The skewness and kurtosis values of all the key variables are also shown in this table in order to check their normality condition before conducting a multiple regression analysis. If the value was near zero, it would be accepted (Hair et al., 2014). The values of all the variables were accepted as well as the normality condition.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of Key Variables

Key variables	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
PROD	3.60	0.70	-0.38	0.55
PRICE	3.59	0.74	-0.38	0.26
PLACE	3.85	0.81	-0.90	0.86

PROMO	3.92	0.80	-0.66	0.47
MEDIA	3.76	0.85	-0.32	0.12
REFER	3.29	0.79	0.09	-0.55
ATTIT	3.39	0.83	0.43	-0.29
BEHAVE	3.56	0.88	-0.29	0.00

- Correlation Analysis

Table 5 shows the correlation coefficients between the key variables. Most of them have a linear relationship. Although all the coefficients were expected to be below .70, two correlation coefficients exceed .70, thus pointing out to some multicollinearity issues (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2012). As shown in Table 5, only. After the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are determined (once the regression analysis is completed), the expected VIF should be less than 5; indicating an absence of multicollinearity issue (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 5: Correlation Coefficients

Variables	PROD	PRICE	PLACE	PROMO	MEDIA	REFER	GEND	AGE
PROD	1							
PRICE	.712**	1						
PLACE	.501**	.572**	1					
PROMO	.467**	.476**	.764**	1				
MEDIA	.437**	.394**	.256**	.237**	1			
REFER	.652**	.635**	.344**	.266**	.502**	1		
GEND	-.143**	-.153**	-.125*	-.106*	-.167**	-.184**	1	
AGE	-.082	-.221**	.099*	.122*	-.042	-.195**	.055	1
INCOM	.081	.015	-.155**	-.127*	-.018	.112*	.119*	.252**

Note: **, * Correlation is significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 level respectively.

- Multiple Regression Analysis

Tables 6 and 7 show the results of the multiple regression analysis that investigates the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. As shown in Table 6, three independent variables – the ‘price’ element of the marketing mix, reference group, and social media – have a positive and significant effect on green attitudes. These three independent variables jointly explained 55 percent of the total variance of green attitudes. This also points to the fact that reference groups have the biggest effect on green behavior (the dependent variable). The regression equation had no issue because all VIF values are lower than 5. Thus, the first regression equation in this research is as follows:

$$\text{ATTIT} = 0.431 \text{ REFER} + 0.261 \text{ PRICE} + 0.188 \text{ MEDIA}.$$

Table 6: Regression Analysis Using the Stepwise Method with Green Attitudes as the Dependent Variable

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-statistics	Sig.	VIF
	β	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	0.135	0.159		0.849	0.396	
REFER	0.455	0.049	0.431	9.276	0.000***	1.918
PRICE	0.295	0.049	0.261	5.960	0.000***	1.699
MEDIA	0.186	0.038	0.188	4.821	0.000***	1.354
F	163.443					
Sig. of F	0.000***					
Adjusted R ²	0.550					

Note: *** it is significant at the .001 level.

Table 7 shows that three independent variables (reference group, promotion, and green attitudes) have a positive significant influence on green behavior. These three independent variables jointly account for 46.6 percent of the total variance of the dependent variable. Moreover, the results indicate that reference groups have the biggest effect on green behavior. When checking the multicollinearity condition by VIF values, it was found that the equation had no issue. Thus, the second regression equation in this research is as follows:

$$\text{BEHAV} = 0.356 \text{ REFER} + 0.230 \text{ PROMO} + 0.279 \text{ ATTIT}.$$

Table 7: Regression Analysis Using the Stepwise Method with Green behavior as the Dependent Variable

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-statistics	Sig.	VIF
	β	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	0.273	0.193		1.413	0.158	
REFER	0.395	0.057	0.356	6.906	0.000***	1.970
PROMO	0.252	0.042	0.230	6.038	0.000***	1.079
ATTIT	0.294	0.054	0.279	5.477	0.000***	1.923
F	115.324					
Sig. of F	0.000***					
Adjusted R ²	0.466					

Note: *** it is significant at the .001 level.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This research study aims to examine the key factors affecting green attitudes and green behavior among green consumers in Phetchabun Province. The descriptive data show that a majority of the respondents are females with most of them holding less than a bachelor's degree. Their average age is 32.9 years and the medium monthly income 12,646 Baht (USD 420). The results show that reference group, price, and social media have a positive and significant effect on green. This is consistent with that of Siddique and Hossain (2018) who determined that reference groups were the most critical factor affecting consumer attitudes. This is, for example, the case with green product awareness. This finding is also in keeping with Delcea et al.'s (2019) study, in which it was determined that social media do influence consumer attitudes toward environmental issues and eco-friendly products. Hossain and Khan (2018) reached the same conclusion. They noted that consumers show a positive attitude toward green product use when the price is reasonable. However, this result fails to align with Agarwal and Ganesh's (2016) findings. They determined that there was a positive relationship between promotion and green attitudes.

Testing the effects of the key factors on consumers' green behavior revealed that reference groups, promotion, and green attitudes had a positive influence on green behavior. Kianpour et al. (2014) also found that reference groups such as families or friends motivate consumers to purchase green products. This determination is also consistent with Hossain and Khan (2018) and Geap et al.'s (2018) findings. They concluded that, as a key component of the marketing mix, promotion can have a lot of influence on consumers' green buying decisions. Abdollahbeigi and Salehi (2019) reached a similar conclusion and found that a positive green attitude influenced intention toward green purchases. Unlike prior research studies, this present study, however, failed to find any impact of demographics on green attitudes or green behavior. Figure 2 captures these results.

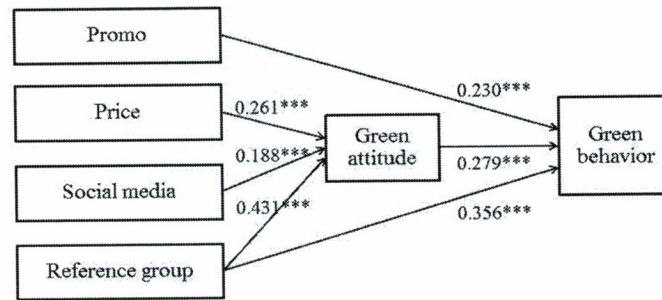


Figure 2: Final Model with Results Using the Stepwise Method

Figure 3 below shows the author's proposed green marketing model for green business management. As indicated in this model, marketers and entrepreneurs who are responsible for the marketing strategy of an organization should focus on the four critical factors that most influence consumers' green behavior. These include satisfaction with, repurchasing, and advocating green products or services. Marketers can use these key factors for strategic planning and determining green production lines. This research model can also be useful for enhancing the evaluation process of the strategies formulated. The four main factors on which to focus are the design of promotional activities, the articulation of a suitable pricing strategy, effective communication in all social media, and regular interaction with the reference groups of targeted consumers. In addition, they should pay special attention to consumers' attitudes toward green products and services, and on how to motivate targeted consumers to become strong advocates of the green cause. This requires, in the first place, satisfactory green consumption, without which repurchasing is unlikely. As the findings strongly suggest, interaction with reference groups via social media is becoming an increasingly important factor which marketers or entrepreneurs cannot ignore as it affects both the green attitudes and green behavior of consumers.

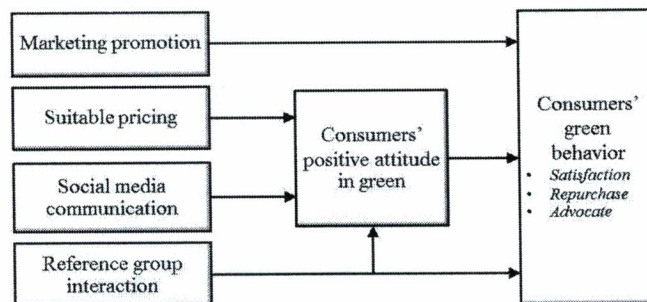


Figure 3: Proposed Green Marketing Model

Therefore organizations need to focus not only on reference groups but also on the testimonies and on all the discussion going on social media as e-word of mouth can either have a positive influence on consumer attitudes or conversely demotivate customers and drive them away from green products. Additionally, marketers and entrepreneurs should conduct effective marketing promotion campaigns as part their aforementioned public relations activities. Last but not least, special attention should place on pricing and for the reasons for the usually other costs to consumers. If accounting for and well explained, higher prices are likely to be more accepted by consumers. This again involves much activity on

social media and effective communication. Focusing on all these factors mean that green businesses will be likely to achieve superior performance.

- Recommendations for Future Studies

Future studies could replicate this research in other areas of the country so as to confirm the validity of the proposed green marketing model under different conditions. This would be beneficial for both the academic and business sectors.

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