



Determinants of Online Impulse Buying Among Young Adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: A Study on Eco-Friendly Food and Beverage Utensils

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Abstract

Eco-friendly product usage is a defining trend in consumer purchase intentions during this decade. Younger, tech-savvy consumers are often more sensitive to environmental concerns when purchasing products due to the abundance of information available on social media platforms. In the food and beverage industry, this trend has led many younger consumers to prefer purchasing eco-friendly, sustainable cutlery for food and beverage consumption. With online social commerce platforms selling eco-friendly utensils readily available, a larger group of consumers, primarily young adults, seem to purchase these products impulsively due to various factors. The four independent variables proposed in this study that seem to influence the online impulse buying behavior of young adults toward these eco-friendly products are fear, serendipity, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and website quality. Convenience sampling was utilized to gain a greater understanding of the targeted consumer group, using a 5-item Likert scale to collect data from respondents. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire items were further confirmed using statistical methods, namely average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha. The hypotheses were tested using AMOS software (version 24) through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to tabulate the results. Based on the study conducted, it is concluded that fear and eWOM do influence the online impulse buying of eco-friendly food utensils among young adults in

Kuala Lumpur. It is further suggested that elements such as fear and eWOM play a significant role in online impulse purchases of eco-friendly utensils, as young adults rely heavily on social media marketing. This reliance contributes to these consumers' growing concern for their future, prompting them to be more environmentally conscious.

Keywords: Online Impulse buying, Eco-Friendly Products, Sustainability, Young Adults

Introduction

Global environmental consciousness has increased consistently over the past few years in response to mounting apprehensions regarding climate change, pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. There is a growing international consensus among governments, organizations, and individuals regarding the critical nature of implementing sustainable practices to alleviate these issues. In the present day, there has been a notable surge in the popularity of eco-friendly products, driven by the increasing emphasis on sustainability and environmental awareness among both consumers and businesses. These eco-friendly products, also called green products or sustainable products, are designed and produced to have minimal negative effects on the environment. Due to a collective desire to reduce ecological damage and an elevated sense of awareness towards environmental issues, these safe, natural products are experiencing a surge in popularity. Eco-friendly products may range from an array of items from apparel, and food, to personal care commodities, and packaging. As younger consumers are trendier and embrace social media, they are more susceptible to protecting the environment and engaging in any form of buying behavior that serves a noble cause like protecting the ecosystem. This has caused a focus on sustainable, environmentally safe products to be produced and marketed towards consumers, ensuring that profit may be made, riding on the current sustainability trend. Younger and younger households and families seem to practice good, environmentally ethical purchasing behavior, which often is a reflection of the changing mode of consumer behavior with an emphasis on sustainable products.

Problem Statement

Young adults always seem to have a particular way of buying products as they typically buy impulsively and without much consideration. When young consumers who were previously dependent on their guardians for financial support suddenly find themselves financially independent, they frequently feel more confident. These young individuals are usually driven to make reckless purchases by their unexpected independence. As social media marketing is prevalent in the current day and age, more and more young consumers are tempted to make impulsive purchases, often causing them to regret their purchases. It may be known that young adults may seem more impulsive in their purchases (Maccarrone-Eaglen & Schofield, 2020), but not much is known about the impulsive behavior of these consumers when it comes to purchases on online platforms. As the younger generation is becoming aware of the danger of their actions towards the environment, companies seem to capitalize on the usage of safer, less hazardous products to be sold, such as environmentally sustainable food and beverage utensils. However, there is a sense of vagueness in the buying practices and behavior of young adults in Malaysia towards these eco-friendly utensils. Thus, this study aims to close the knowledge gap between the online impulsive purchase behavior of young adults on eco-friendly utensils in Klang Valley.

Literature Review

The following subchapter will address the several proponents that should be investigated and present previous research to comprehend the different dimensions and aspects that could affect consumers' intentions to buy organic food utensils.

Eco-Friendly Products in Malaysia

As public awareness of environmental issues rises, Malaysia, like many other nations, has witnessed an increase in the availability and popularity of eco-friendly products. To reduce single-use plastic packaging, biodegradable and compostable food packaging alternatives produced from cornstarch, sugarcane bagasse, and bamboo fiber are becoming more widespread in Malaysia's food and beverage industry. Eating utensils such as forks and spoons as well as kitchen instruments that are designed to have a minimal environmental impact throughout their entire lifecycle are considered eco-friendly utensils (Nguyen et al., 2020). These utensils are constructed using sustainable materials, frequently biodegradable or reusable, to reduce consumer dependence on the usage of plastic utensils that contribute to ecological contamination (George & George, 2023; Wahab et al., 2021). Examples such as stainless steel and wooden utensils are often seen to be a staple amongst consumers engaging in food consumption all around Malaysia.

Impulse Buying

Impulse purchasing is a phenomenon characterized by the occurrence of impromptu and unplanned purchases, frequently motivated by external stimuli, emotions, or impulses, as opposed to logical deliberation (Rook, 1987; Bossuyt et al., 2017). It entails impulsive purchases of items without giving due consideration to their utility, necessity, or long-term worth (Gogoi, 2020). Lacking forethought or deliberation, impulsive purchases can result in wasteful expenditures, buyer's remorse, and disarray (Baumeister, 2002). Impulsive buying can lead to undesirable outcomes such as overspending, and feelings of regret or guilt after making impulsive purchases, even though it can also give momentary exhilaration or satisfaction (Gogoi, 2020; Seinauskiene et al., 2016; Öztürk, 2010).

Online Impulse Buying

Online impulse purchasing occurs when consumers make unanticipated, quick purchases while browsing or shopping on the Internet (Ata & Sezer, 2021). This behavior brings towards purchasing decisions, which are frequently influenced by external stimuli, desires, or emotions encountered while engaging in online shopping. While online impulse purchasing and traditional impulse buying share many characteristics, the former is enabled by its unique features and dynamics on social and e-commerce platforms. With an abundance of online platforms that serve consumers with many options for purchasing their desired products, online impulse buying behavior has become a troublesome matter among young adults (Filippas et al., 2020; Dharta et al., 2021).

Serendipity

Serendipity is a pleasant or surprising event that often happens to a person by the avarice of luck, accidentally or by chance (Bao & Yang, 2022). It describes the occurrence of discovering worthwhile or enjoyable events, opportunities, or insights that were not deliberately sought but rather happened to be encountered (Bao & Yang, 2022). Curiosity, along with openness and receptivity to new possibilities, defines serendipity. Being sensitive, open-minded, and curious about new experiences or possibilities often leads to serendipity. It stresses the value of accepting that one cannot know what the future holds, of keeping an open mind, and of seeing the good in random meetings and unanticipated events (Liang et al., 2022). Consumers who encounter a pleasant experience by chance when purchasing a product often spread the good news about the product to their friends and family due to the sudden joy from the event (Naseebullah et al., 2023). Serendipity has been seen to be an influential trigger in the purchase behavior of young adults, with many younger consumers believing in elements such as fate and luck in making their purchases (Kim et al., 2021).

Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM)

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is seen as extremely relevant and important in influencing consumer purchase behavior in this day and age (Andreani et al., 2023). eWOM refers to all informal communications transmitted to consumers via internet-based platforms. These communications concern the functionality or attributes of specific products or services

(Litvin et al., 2008; Akdim, 2021). As a form of online communication, social media platforms facilitate user-to-user interaction in a much more elaborate manner. Consumers often use online platforms to search for reviews of products before making a purchase (Fileri et al., 2021). This makes eWOM a crucial aspect for consumers of this generation in gauging purchase intention and behavior (Akdim, 2021). eWOM is also seen as a precursor to the online impulse buying behavior of consumers, with younger consumers using this form of "electronic gossip" to influence their purchasing decisions (Albayrak & Ceylan, 2021). Additionally, eWOM appears to influence younger consumers' purchase intentions, subsequently leading to impulsive buying behavior (Hamzan et al., 2023).

Fear

A psychological definition of fear would be an emotional reaction to some sort of perceived threat (Khawaja, 2018; Chiu et al., 2022). To safeguard the body and emotions from danger or prevent unfavorable consequences, it sets off a variety of physiological and behavioral reactions (Khawaja, 2018). To encourage hasty purchases, marketers frequently play on consumers' fears. When faced with uncontrollably stressful and unfavorable dilemmas, buyers tend to use impulsive shopping as a coping mechanism (Verplanken & Sato, 2011; Naeem, 2021). Advertisers and marketers often use scarcity and urgency to trigger fear mechanisms and encourage quick purchases. This can occur when people worry they do not have a sufficient amount of a product or feel unable to address a perceived threat. An interesting element of fear is that it may sometimes cause consumers to change their negative behaviors. Fear has a detrimental effect on mental health and overall well-being; therefore, the fear of destroying the environment may increase the likelihood that consumers will follow preventive measures, such as taking care of the environment (Pakpour et al., 2020; Harper et al., 2021; Chiu et al., 2022).

Website Quality

Website quality refers to the features and attributes of a website that often engage a consumer to purchase with ease (Hsu et al., 2012). The quality of a website is frequently an important factor in shaping consumers' purchase intentions and ultimately affects purchase behavior (Mohd Sam & Tahir, 2009). Website quality is often reflective of a company's brand image, with a well-designed website for consumer purchases often leading to increased brand loyalty and online impulse buying (Wells et al., 2011). Website quality has also been seen as a precursor to consumer loyalty to a brand and often leads to favorable word-of-mouth (Mohd Sam & Tahir, 2009). In many instances, a consumer's first interaction with a brand is through its website, which is crucial to fostering consumer loyalty, as a company's brand image and reputation are often positively showcased with a well-designed, attractive website (Hsu et al., 2012).

The Significance of this Research

This research has significance in further understanding the online impulsive consumption behavior of young adults towards Eco-Friendly products, mainly utensils for food and beverages. The research shows the relevance of understanding the antecedents of young consumers in their online impulsive behaviors with these eco-friendly products. It is relevant as there is a need to further understand online platforms, with the emergence of social media marketing truly a medium in causing consumers to shop impulsively. An understanding of the elements that surround younger consumers such as Fear, Serendipity, Electronic Word of Mouth, and Website Quality is further hoped to be understood with this study. As young adults often are exposed to environmental awareness through social media and online platforms in their daily lives, it is only crucial for researchers to further understand if their purchase behavior is truly reflective of their concern towards the environment and ecosystem. This research is important as it will also allow stakeholders in Eco-Friendly product companies to further understand the factors that influence the buying behavior of young adults in purchasing these environmentally safe products for their daily consumption. As Malaysia is seeing a boom in educated younger buyers, it would cause an understanding of their purchase behavior and various demands that may shape their consumer practices.

Research Questions

The variables in this study are the interplay of the independent variables, mainly peer pressure, price discount, and Electronic Word of Mouth, towards the impulsive buying behaviors of consumers. Thus, the research brings about the following questions:

1. Does Serendipity impact Young Adult's Online Impulse purchases of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?
2. Does EWOM impact Young Adult's Online Impulse purchases of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?
3. Does Fear impact Young Adult's Online Impulse purchases of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?
4. Does Website Quality Impact Young Adults Online Impulse Purchases of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?

Research Objectives

It is proposed that this research will be able to have an aim to understand the following objectives on impulsive buying:

1. To determine the impact of Serendipity on Young Adult's Online Impulse purchases of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
2. To determine the impact of EWOM on Young Adult's Online Impulse purchases of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

3. To determine the impact of Fear on Young Adult's Online Impulse purchases of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
4. To determine the impact of Website Quality on Young Adult's Online Impulse purchases of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

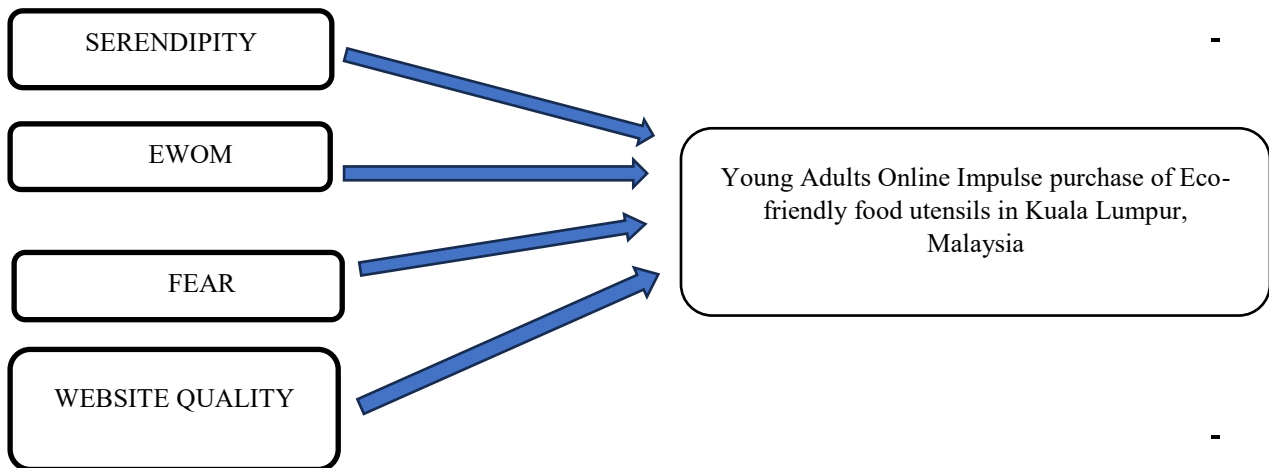


Figure 1. The Framework of the Study

Research Hypothesis

H1: Serendipity has a positive relationship with Young Adults Online Impulse purchase of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

H2: EWOM has a positive relationship with Young Adults Online Impulse purchase of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

H3: Fear has a positive relationship with Young Adults Online Impulse purchase of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

H4: Website Quality has a positive relationship with Young Adult's Online Impulse purchases of Eco-friendly food utensils in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Methodology

The following subchapters will discuss the research methodology of the study in place, with the various steps taken to conduct the research.

Research Design

The study was conducted using a quantitative method, deploying the SPSS AMOS (v.24) software to understand the respondent characteristics. Demographic analysis was conducted to understand the basic details of the respondents studied, and the path analysis was further tested using SPSS AMOS (v.24). Sampling methods were done using the convenience sampling method, as this method was used as it is one of the most practical modes of sampling, with consideration that this object of study is younger adults in the vicinity of major

cities in Klang Valley. Respondents were given a questionnaire link, electronically via a bar code to ease their corresponding of the data. This is also in line with our study of the target market, namely the younger generation who often prefer to engage with their electronic devices in their daily activities. A token of appreciation is given to respondents in the form of a key chain to each participant in this study.

Instrument

The study utilized a 5-Scale-Likert-based questionnaire to understand the responses of the target consumers. The questionnaire items were modified from various literature to suit the study as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Questionnaire items

Construct	Items	Sources	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)/AVE/Composite Reliability (CR)
Serendipity	SRN1: When purchasing eco-friendly utensils online, I gained unexpected information. SRN2: I discovered things that astonished me while purchasing eco-friendly utensils online. SRN3: I stumbled onto what I wanted to buy when shopping online. SRN4: Shopping online provided me with new perspectives on everyday experiences.	Bao, Z., & Yang, J. (2022).	CA (0.929) AVE (0.822) CR (0.9488)
EWOM	EWOM1: I frequently read internet product reviews from other customers to make sure I'm purchasing the correct product or brand. EWOM2: Before I purchase a given product or brand, I usually read product reviews from other customers online. EWOM3: I worry about my choice if I don't read internet product reviews from customers before purchasing a product or brand.	Bambauer-Sachse, S., & Mangold, S. (2011). Reza Jalilvand, M., & Samiei, N. (2012).	CA (0.711) AVE (0.872) CR (0.883)
Fear	FR1: I am particularly concerned about the risks of non-eco-friendly utensils. FR2: I feel a negative emotion when I think about hazards to the environment. FR3: I'm scared I'll die because of the dangers of the toxic environment. FR4: I become anxious or my heart palpates when I consider becoming sick from consuming food from non-eco-friendly utensils.	Chiu, W., Oh, G. E., & Cho, H. (2022).	CA (0.912) AVE (0.944) CR (0.932)
Online Impulse Buying	OIB 1: I want to make a quick buy due to the good quality and reasonable price. OIB 2: Buying this thing was not in my plans before I visited this website/online store. OIB 3: I spent more money than I had intended because of the thrilling marketing events for eco-friendly products. OIB 4: Because eco-friendly utensil shopping was so entertaining, I made several hasty, unplanned purchases.	Febrilia, I., & Warokka, A. (2021).	CA (0.928) AVE (0.823) CR (0.922)

Website Quality	WQ1: A quality website, in my opinion, is one that is exceptionally well-organized. WQ2: I enjoy making purchases on websites that offer trustworthy information. WQ3: A high-quality website maintains its relevance throughout time. WQ4: My willingness to purchase can be influenced by a visually appealing website.	Febrilia, I., & Warokka, A. (2021).	CA (0.938) AVE (0.834) CR (0.942)
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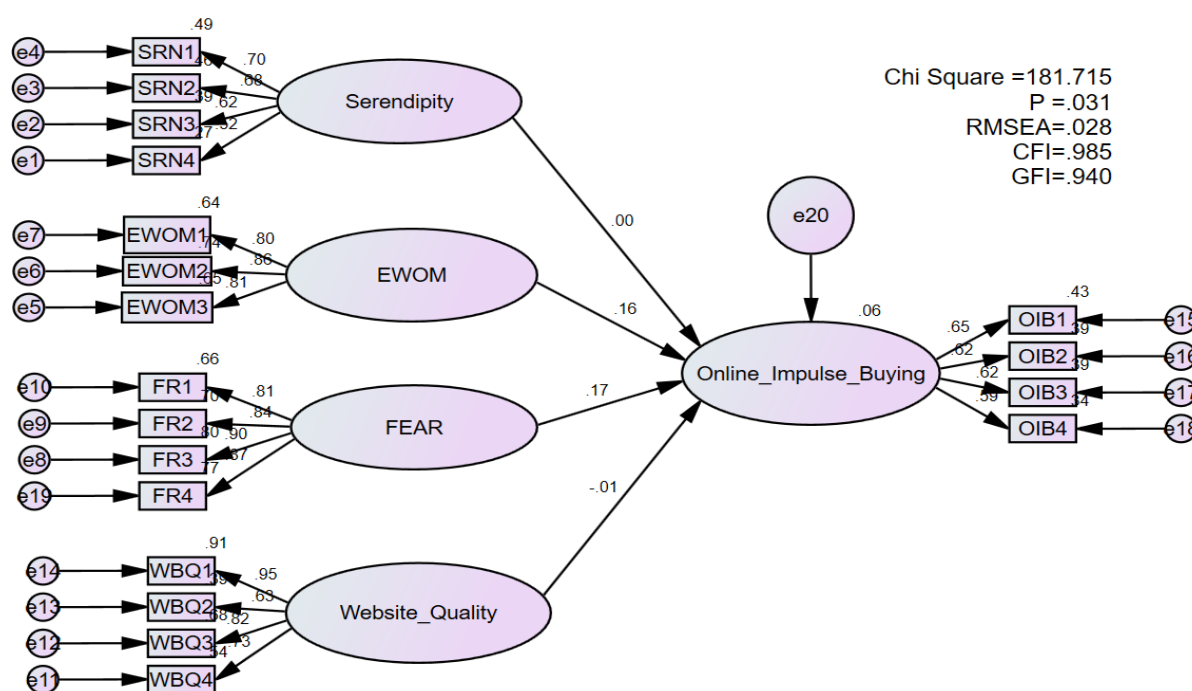


Figure 2. Structural Model via Path Analysis

Results

Table 2 shows the demographic variables tested to capture the behavior of the respondents in Klang Valley. The total sample size of respondents was 287, which is above the required sample size needed for a Structural Equation Modelling analysis (Kline, 2011; 2023). As seen in the demographic analysis, the majority of young adults in this study are male, with a capacity of 65%, while 37.28% fall between the ages of 21 to 26 years old. Most respondents (approximately 61%) are seen to use eco-friendly food utensils at least once or twice a week.

Table 2. Demographic Analysis

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	187	65.1
Female	100	34.9
Age		
18-21 Years Old	91	31.7
21-26 Years Old	107	37.28

>30 Years Old	89	31.01
Monthly Household Income (MYR)		
Less than 2000 MYR	68	23.69
Around 2000-5000 MYR	144	50.17
More than 5000 MYR	75	26.13
Frequency of Eco-Friendly Utensil Usage (Per Week)		
1-2 times per week	175	60.97
3-5 times per week	85	29.62
6-7 times per week	27	9.40

Figure 2 further shows that the structural model is appropriate for the study and has reasonable parameters. There was a positive correlation between the dependent variables and the factor loadings. Table 3 shows that the model fit was appropriately evaluated using variables like RMSEA, CFI, and Chi-Square. As advised by Hu et al., (1999) and Teng et al., (2016), the results are deemed acceptable for research as the RMSEA values were below the threshold level of 0.8, but the CFI values were above the threshold level of 0.9.

Table 3. CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Indices for Model Fit	Values
Chi-Square	181.715
RMSEA	0.028
CFI	0.985
GFI	0.940
P value	0.031

As attested by Hair et al. (2011), Bagozzi and Yi (1988), and Yarimoglu et al. (2019), the instrument questions were analyzed for validity and reliability using Cronbach's alpha, average variance explained (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). Table 1 encapsulates the results of these tests. As seen in the table, the values accepted, including Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and CR, were significantly above the required threshold (Hair et al., 2011; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Yarimoglu et al., 2019).

Table 4. Hypotheses Analysis

Hypothesis Testing		Estimate	Result	P value
H ₁	SRN → OIB	0.002	Unsupported	0.03
H ₂	EWOM → OIB	0.162	Supported	0.03
H ₃	FR → OIB	0.170	Supported	0.03
H ₄	WBQ → OIB	-0.012	Unsupported	0.03

*SRN: Serendipity

**EWOM: Electronic Word of Mouth

***FR: Fear

****WBQ: Website Quality

*****OIB: Online Impulse Buying

The readings for Table 4 show the justifications for the hypotheses of the research. The results show significant relationships between eWOM and Fear of online impulsive buying of young adults. The analysis of hypotheses is shown in Table 4, implying that H₂ and H₃ are statistically significant, while H₁ and H₄ are not. The low value (β of 0.002, $p=0.03$ and β of -

0.012, $p=0.03$) rejected the hypothesis that there is a correlation between Serendipity and Website Quality towards online impulsive buying of young adults. It appears that there is a significant link ($\beta = 0.162$, $p=0.03$ and $\beta = 0.170$, $p=0.03$) between EWOM and Fear of young adults' online impulsive buying of eco-friendly utensils.

Discussion

The results show a significant relationship between eWOM and Fear of Online impulsive purchase behaviors of young adults towards eco-friendly food and beverage utensils. It is seen that young adults are often proponents of eWOM when it comes to their impulsive behaviors. Young consumers are much more easily influenced by exposure online, which often causes them to be fearful of food and beverage consumption practices. As more and more younger adults are environmentally aware of the dangers of their actions towards the ecosystem, it is prevalent that the influence of emotional constructs such as fear and online “gossip” affects their impulsive purchase behavior online.

Future Recommendations and Limitations

It is further recommended that this study be modified in future studies, by perhaps looking more into the role of income level and gender when analyzing the buying choices of consumer young adults. As younger adults mostly have newfound financial freedom due to their newly minted status as new earners, it is also recommended that further analysis be done to understand the relevance of the financial strength of the consumers in purchasing eco-friendly utensils and products. This is because eco-friendly products are often a bit pricier than the average plastic utensils versions, causing consumers to be hesitant to purchase these products. There were also limitations to this study, with the study mainly done on a certain age range of consumers, younger adults. This may imply that younger adults are trendier and often looking for choices in their buying style. Also, another limitation present was the fact that the study was conducted in Klang Valley, creating a geographical limitation of the area. Perhaps a suggestion would be to have the idea and suggestions be applied to other parts of the country such as East Malaysia and West Malaysia.

Conclusion

This study shows relevance in further understanding the various dimensions that influence consumers, mainly younger consumers, on their intention to purchase a product. As eco-friendly utensils are seen more in restaurants and cafes all over the country, it is wise for establishments to understand the different forces that seem to influence the intention of young

adults to purchase these products. Eco-friendly products such as utensils for food consumption are as relevant as it is now as compared to a decade ago. Consumers often choose these more environmentally safe products as they worry about their children's future and the environment around them. As seen by this study, elements of Fear and eWOM still play a huge part in deciding the buying behavior of young adults in Malaysia. Young adults are tech-savvy and this elevates their knowledge about the environment, making them more worried about the damage done to the ecosystem around us. As young adults are often on online platforms in most periods of their day, they are influenced by a variety of advertisements and media that inform them of the dangers of their actions towards the world. It is this reason that causes them to be mostly rife with fear, ensuring their purchase behavior is equally affected by these fears of the environmental damage and the effect it may have on their children's future. As seen in this research, eWOM also played a significant part in influencing their buying behavior of eco-friendly utensils. eWOM has always been a front-runner for young consumers of this generation in molding their consumer characteristics. Choices of products and buying behavior are very much a product of word of mouth received, electronically and often through social media, which causes them to be more cautious of their purchases. A possible suggestion is to enhance online advertisements and marketing strategies aimed at attracting younger consumers by raising their awareness of the importance of protecting the ecosystem. Educating them about the dangers of hazardous, non-eco-friendly products could help shape their behavior, fostering a more environmentally conscious mindset in the future.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work. In addition, the ethical issues including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and, or falsification, double publication and, or submission, and redundancy have been completely witnessed by the authors.

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