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The Effect of Self-Esteem and Social Responsible Claims on Generation Y Consumers' Perceptions about Coffee Bean Products

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how the personality trait of self-esteem influences Generation Y (Gen Y) consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards coffee bean products claimed to be either fair-trade or organic. Gen Y consumers' perceptions about coffee bean products are investigated in the present study as they have become a significant consumer segment for the worldwide market. An online survey methodology will be implemented to collect data for further analysis. Findings of the study will provide insights into relationship between Gen Y consumers' self-concept and their purchase behaviours as social responsible consumers. It provides potential value in assisting entrepreneurs in promoting organic or fair-trade coffee bean products among Gen Y consumers. The findings may be applied to other industry, such as fair-trade tea leaf industry.

Keywords: Generation Y; Social Responsible claims; Self-esteem; Sustainable product; Coffee Bean

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THE EFFECT OF SELF-ESTEEM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBLE CLAIMS ON GENERATION Y CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT COFFEE BEAN PRODUCTS

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how the personality trait of self-esteem influences Generation Y (Gen Y) consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards coffee bean products claimed to be either fair-trade or organic. Gen Y consumers' perceptions about coffee bean products are investigated in the present study as they have become a significant consumer segment for the worldwide market. An online survey methodology will be implemented to collect data for further analysis. Findings of the study will provide insights into relationship between Gen Y consumers' self-concept and their purchase behaviours as social responsible consumers. It provides potential value in assisting entrepreneurs in promoting organic or fair-trade coffee bean products among Gen Y consumers. The findings may be applied to other industry, such as fair-trade tea leaf industry.

Keywords: *Generation Y, Social Responsible claims, Self-esteem, Sustainable product, Coffee Bean*

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the number of ethical consumption, either being fair-trade or organic, has grown significantly (Crane and Matten, 2003) as the two attributes associate with environmental protection and support of small farmers (Luetchford, 2015). It also represents an ethical product choice that helps consumers show their preferences to support a more just and sustainable world (Barham & Weber, 2011).

Gen Y consumers, born between 1977 and 1994 (Giovannini et al., 2015), is the main target segment of consumers for sustainable product focused companies. This is because they are young, huge and powerful group with a long future of purchase decision-making (Hwang et al., 2015). Gen Y consumers are also found to be more sceptical about ethical messages than other generations (Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire, 2011). However, very little prior research examines how self-esteem and sustainable messages of being organic or fair-trade will influence Gen Y consumers' buying behaviours. Therefore, it will be the focus of the present study.

2. Literature Review

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) was commonly applied in prior studies and found to be effective and useful in predicting purchase behaviours in relation to social responsible consumption (Hwang et al., 2015).

The TRA will be used in this research as a theoretical framework.

3. Research Methods

An online survey method will be used to collect data. All participants will receive an email that directs them to the online questionnaire. Responses will be recorded by SurveyMonkey® and analysed by SPSS 21 software.

Gen Y consumers are the target population. A convenience sample of college and university students within Gen Y's age bracket will be conducted in Western Australia. The contact email of potential participants will be gathered from the academic registrar's offices. All potential participants will receive a survey invitation email explaining purpose and contributions

of the study along with a consent form for them to sign. Both open- and close-ended questions are included in the survey questionnaire. The former will be analysed by content analysis and the latter will be analysed by quantitative analysis.

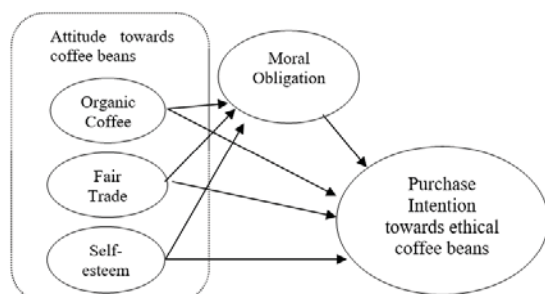


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Gen Y consumers have become a significant segment for sustainable product consumption with increasing purchase power and sustainability awareness. However, very few prior studies have researched on how Gen Y's self-esteem and moral obligation will influence their purchase intention towards organic or fair-trade coffee bean products. The present study aims to narrow the gap in the literature and shed some light on sustainable product consumption among Gen Y consumers. The study findings can assist entrepreneurs in promoting fair-trade or organic certified coffee bean products to young consumers as it provides some insight to understand how Gen Y's perceptions towards socially responsible products. The findings may be applied to other similar sustainable industry, like fair-trade or organic tea leaf industry. It will lead to a more eco conscious product choice and a more sustainable environment. As the present study uses convenience sampling method, some limitations may exist within the study. That is because the sample collection is limited to a certain geographical location. Samples collected may not represent the entire population. Generalisation of the findings will also be limited. The adoption of convenience sampling method, instead of other more

representative methods, is justified by the exploratory nature of the present study. It is recommended that future research may choose a sample that is more representative of the population. Future study may examine consumers in different geographical location or under other age brackets, which can then be compared to the results obtained by the present study.

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