Consumer Resistance and Optimal Pricing Strategy for Green Innovation Products: Can Green Products Survive Market Competition?

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Abstract

This study developed a framework to examine the relationship between consumer resistance behavior from consumer perceptions of risk and consumer perceptions of the pricing premium of innovative green products. The results for the SEM indicated that both perceived risk and environmental awareness have a direct influence on consumer resistance to green innovation products when evaluating green consumer electronics. In addition, environmentally concerned consumers were found be positively related to willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products. Furthermore, the theoretical and practical implications of the study provide valuable information for marketers and policymakers aiming to promote the adoption of green innovation products in Chinese markets.

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1. Introduction

The environmental problems the World is facing today, with the rapid growth of the economy and the patterns of consumer consumption and behavior worldwide will be the main causes of environmental deterioration in the coming years. A topic that has received little attention in the consumer behavior and innovation diffusion literature is consumer resistance to innovation (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005; Buligescu et al., 2012). From a marketing perspective, a green revolution and the adoption of green products can be facilitated if we understand the consumer behavior underlying the decision to purchase green products. Consumer resistance to green innovations is a generally under-researched area, and empirical evidence is scarce. Companies want to find the answers as to why people resist buying green innovation products. One reason for this is that consumer resistance has lacked a clear definition and rigorous conceptualization. Further, few attempts to develop operational measures of resistance exist, and empirical evidence is scarce (Kleijnen et al., 2009). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to contribute to our current understanding on the notion and drivers of consumer resistance.

Given that the successful commercialization of a green innovation depends on the adoption decision of consumers, we find it crucial to examine which factors influence consumer attitudes towards green innovation and hence influence their adoption of innovations. In order to answer this question, this paper is essentially exploratory in nature and has two objectives. The first objective is to develop a framework for a better understanding of the influence of consumers' risk attitudes and resistance behavior, focusing on risk aspects that consumers perceive and associate with the purchase and usage of green technologies in general and in the context of green consumer electronics in particular. The second objective is to examine consumer perceptions of the pricing premium of green products and the demographic and situational factors that may affect their adoption. As a result, this study will try to elaborate the various key concepts in green marketing and derive policy recommendations on how countries can increase the demand for innovation by identifying the determinants of consumers' green purchasing behavior.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Consumer Resistance to Green Innovations

Consumers who are aware of and interested in environmental issues are called green consumers (Soonthonsmai, 2007; Chen & Chai, 2010). These green consumers usually create petitions, boycott manufacturers and retailers and actively promote the preservation of the planet (Fergus, 1991). Ottman (1992) reported that consumers accept green products when their primary need for performance, quality, convenience, and affordability are met, and when they understand how a green product can help to solve environmental problems. The

knowledge gap on the uses and values of green products prevents consumers from committing themselves to any purchase decisions. While strategies to increase innovation adoption usually emphasize the benefits of the innovation, a strategy to reduce risk perception should not rely exclusively on emphasizing additional product benefits. Risk reduction strategies are crucial in diminishing consumer resistance towards green innovation. The concerns and worries of consumers need to be taken seriously and must be addressed appropriately.

2.2 The Antecedents of Consumer Resistance

Stone & Grønhaug (1993) were the first authors to define perceived risk, and they identified six risk dimensions: performance, physical, social, time, psychological and economic. Perceived risk is also a well established concept in the resistance literature, and various studies have distinguished among four main types of risk, including physical, economic, functional and social risk, that consumers associate with innovations (Claudy et al., 2010; Kleijnenet al., 2009; Stone and Grønhaug, 1993). In this paper, the term environmental attitude is used when referring to individual environmental risk perception except when different concepts are used in the respective theories. Based on the previously cited theoretical and empirical literature, the following hypothesis referring to attitudes towards the environment and green innovation products are summarized as:

H_1: Consumer perception of a physical risk has a positive effect on consumer resistance toward the adoption of green innovation products.

H_2: Consumer perception of an economic risk has a positive effect on consumer resistance toward the adoption of green innovation products.

H_3: Consumer perception of a functional risk has a positive effect on consumer resistance toward the adoption of green innovation products.

H_4: Consumer perception of a social risk has a positive effect on consumer resistance toward the adoption of green innovation products.

Lee (2009) and Mei, Ling, & Hooi (2012) defined environmental attitude as an individual's value judgment of environmental protection which taps the individual's cognitive assessment of the value of the environmental protection. In addition, Nordlund & Garvill (2003) and Harring & Jagers (2013) found that an increased ecocentric value orientation led to increased awareness of environmental problems and personal norms toward reducing car use, considering that values directly affect personal norms and indirectly influence the latter through beliefs. These connections have been checked within various studies conducted in the vein of pro-environmental behavior and conservation (De Groot, 2008; Ibtissem, 2010). However, our research suggests that the impact of information campaigns on environmental behavior may sometimes take a longer path than is usually considered.

H_5: Consumer's perceived environmental awareness has a negative effect on consumer resistance to adopt green innovation products.

2.3 Pricing of Green Products

Berggren (2012) and Okada & Mais (2010) argued that the consumer behavior connected to products with new green alternatives has changed our buying processes, eco-consciousness, and willingness to pay premiums. An important difference between green products and ordinary products is that consumers usually bear the monetary cost of such use whereas employees do not. The cost and pricing structure may have a significant impact on consumers' green product use. However, there is lack of studies conducted on Chinese and Taiwanese consumers regarding their green behavior or purchase intentions towards green products. Thus, we add price value as a predictor of behavioral intention to use a technology. The present study tries to bridge this gap by interviewing consumers in order to understand to what extent consumers are willing to pay based on green environmental awareness when buying consumer electronic products and to determine how consumers differ in terms of their willingness to pay. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H_6: *Consumers are willing to pay a premium for green innovation products.*

H_7: *There is no difference in the buying behavior of environmentally concerned consumers and those who are not.*

H_8: *Consumers characteristics, such as gender, educational level, age, marital status and region will affect their attitudes towards antecedents of consumer resistance and willingness to pay for green innovation products.*

3. Methodology and Methodology

3.1 Research Model

As shown in Figure 1, these antecedents and moderators have all been adapted for use in the proposed research model.

Figure 1 Research Model
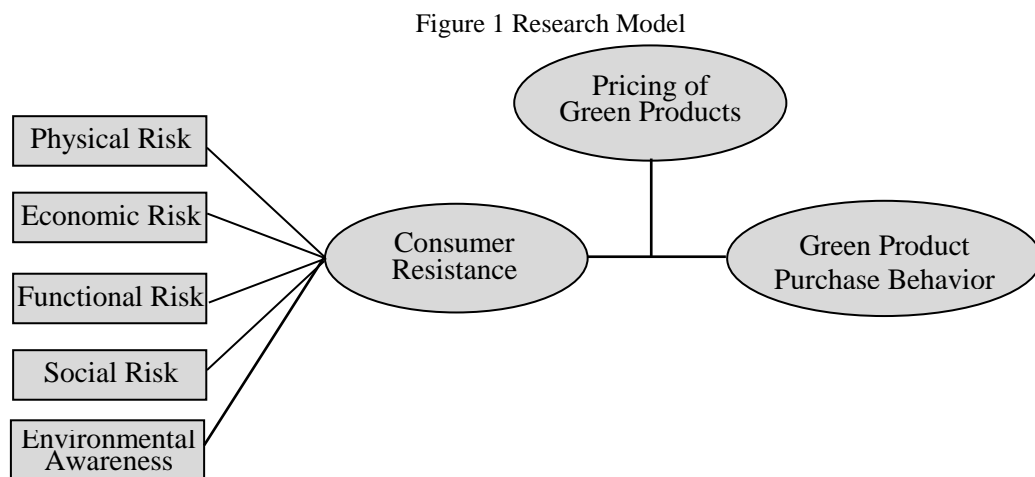
3.2 Sample selection and Descriptive Statistics

Following the elimination of papers that were clearly invalid or did not contain sufficient answers, 1,178 of the 1,500 responses were found to be useful (78.53% of total survey). The sample respondents were comprised of 48.81% males and 51.19% females. The majority of the respondents were in an age range between 21-30 years (25.30%) and 31-40 years (25.04%), while the groups with the lowest percentage were respondents from 51-60 years (9.85%) and over 60 years (5.28%). The mean age of the sample was 31.9 years of age (SD = 4.7 years). Most respondents were current university students studying for an undergraduate qualification or already had one (45.29%). A significant minority had primary school qualifications (13%). In terms of respondent occupation, the majority were students (26.40%), followed by homemakers (25.21%) and laborers (20.21%). The majority of the respondents were married or in a de facto relationship (59.17%). Over one-third of the respondents were respectively from Taiwan and China (37.61% and 35.48%). Hong Kong respondents accounted for one-forth of the sample (26.91%).

3.3 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Following Anderson & Gerbing (1988), we also conducted confirmatory factor analysis to further establish the reliability and discriminant validity of the multi-item scales. The results are shown the Cronbach's α values of the measurement items in the research model. All have Cronbach's α greater than 0.7, which is the normally agreed upon minimum value. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to check the statistical validity of the constructs. All AVE values are greater than 0.8, which indicates that the model had convergent validity. The square-root values of AVE were greater than the correlations between the corresponding constructs, and the confidence intervals of the coefficients did not include 1.0, which indicated that the constructs had discriminant validity.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results of Hypotheses Tests in Consumer Characteristics

These analyses were used to test H_8 (relationships between demographic variables and the attitudes towards antecedents of consumer resistance and willingness to pay for green innovation products). This study has mainly fulfilled the research objectives. It has identified the factors that could contribute towards green purchase behavior and the demographic characteristics that play an important role in influencing the factors that in turn affect green purchasing behavior.

Table 1: Consumer Characteristics Affecting Behavior Related to Green Purchasing

Profiles	Construct	PR	ER	FR	SR	EA	PB	PGP
Gender	F	2.43	1.36	2.37	0.97	1.12	0.24	1.97
	Sig.	0.07	0.18	0.08	0.54	0.20	0.77	0.10
Age	F	7.73**	2.99*	1.75	2.30	7.48**	15.56**	5.53**
	Sig.	0.00	0.02	0.09	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00
Education	F	0.04	1.48	2.12	2.29	1.98	2.11	1.03
	Sig.	0.72	0.11	0.07	0.06	0.09	0.07	0.19
Occupation	F	2.01	0.06	0.16	0.43	2.33	2.18	0.09
	Sig.	0.12	0.81	0.70	0.64	0.08	0.10	0.75
Region	F	2.73	1.56	0.75	1.96	2.05	4.61**	19.94**
	Sig.	0.06	0.11	0.52	0.09	0.08	0.00	0.00
Marital	F	2.04	1.13	0.03	0.97	1.47	1.87	0.08
	Sig.	0.08	0.42	0.94	0.58	0.26	0.15	0.81

*$p<0.05$; **$p<0.01$

According to the above results (Table 1) obtained only the demographic variables of younger age group and region of residence partly (Table 1) are significant and positively impact the probability of the attitudes towards antecedents of consumer resistance and willingness to pay for green innovation products. Gender, Education, Occupation, and Marital Status are not significant, and they do not have an effect on the probability of consumers' green purchase behavior. The results obtained show some differences when compared to those of previous studies (Mostafa, 2007, Lee, 2008; Chen & Chai, 2010; Drozdenko et al., 2011). In other words, age group exhibited a positive interacting effect with physical risk, economic risk, environmental awareness, green product purchase behavior and pricing of green products. Region of residence exhibited significant interactions with green product purchase and pricing of green products. From this, H_8 was determined to be partially supported.

Table 2: Descriptive of ANOVA on Age Group Differences

Age Groups	N	PR	ER	EA	PB	PGP
Under 20 years	156	4.05	4.17	4.35	3.61	4.49
21-30 years	298	3.44	3.75	3.98	3.27	4.07
31-40 years	295	3.72	4.01	4.14	3.38	4.06
41-50 years	239	3.75	4.09	4.20	3.27	4.18
51-60 years	116	3.45	3.72	3.85	2.98	4.23
Over 60 years	74	3.95	4.24	4.27	3.56	4.17
Total	1178	3.69	3.98	4.09	3.33	4.18

The above results (Table 1) indicate a statistically significant F value in age groups affecting behavior related to green purchasing. By looking at the computed means (Table 2) respondents who were under 20 years old (adolescents) appeared to indicate that factors

related to consumer resistance are highly important to them as compared to adults (over 50 years). Respondents 41-50 years and over 60 years exhibited significantly higher means than other age groups in the areas of environmental awareness and green product purchases. Remarkably, all age groups displayed relatively higher willingness to pay for green products, with those under 20 years being the highest and those from 21-40 years the lowest.

Table 3: Descriptive of ANOVA on Regions of Residence Differences

Construct Regions	N	PB	PGP
China	418	3.47	4.02
Hong Kong	317	3.22	4.49
Taiwan	443	3.27	4.11
Total	1178	3.33	4.18

Referring to Table 3, China exhibited a significantly higher mean than other regions (Taiwan and Hong Kong) in regard to green product purchase behavior. In contrast, residents of Hong Kong were willing to spend more than other regions for purchasing green products. Therefore, it is crucial to determine how these customers of three regions and how much they would be willing to pay for them. For pricing to become relevant to the final purchasing decision, the consumer has to be aware of the actual price. This is not self-evident because it is impossible for consumers to use all available information in a purchasing situation, and hence price knowledge is often very low. There are several product-specific factors that influence the probability for price to play a decisive role for a consumer. However, it seems difficult to say what the exact influence of each of these factors is in any given situation.

In order to investigate the willingness of consumers to pay for green innovation products in the three regions under consideration, we structured an open-ended question adopted from Drozdenko et al. (2011). This question was used to measure respondents' willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products.

Assume you are looking for a new, innovative music player for yourself. You find one that is "green" --- It was produced, processed, and packaged in an environmentally friendly way and its components when discarded will not harm the environment. If a regular version of it costs $200, what is the MAXIMUM you are willing to pay extra for the green version?

Table 4: Respondents' Regions and their Willingness to Pay More for Environmentally Products

Construct Regions	Mean	Premium %	*F* value	*P*
China	209.65	4.83%		
Hong Kong	232.39	16.20%	11.75	0.00
Taiwan	216.92	8.46%		

The above results (Table 4) show a statistically significant F value (11.75) that indicated in the three regions under consideration, consumers were willing to pay a premium for a green product. Consumers in Hong Kong indicated that they were willing to pay a 16.20% premium (232.39) for a "green" music player above a conventional music player that costs $200. Consumers in China indicated that they were willing to pay a 4.83% premium (209.65), and in Taiwan that they were willing to pay a 8.46% premium (216.92) for a "*green*" music player above a conventional music player that costs $200. This premium for consumers in Hong Kong was found to be statistically significantly greater than consumers in Taiwan and China with regard to their willingness to pay extra for green products.

4.2 Results of Hypotheses Tests in Research Model

After we established the validity and reliability of the measurement model, we examined the fit of the data to the model. The $\chi 2 /df$ measure of model fit was 2.32, and the RMSEA (0.025) was below the threshold of 0.05, indicating a good model fit. Comparing our specified model with the null model, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.93) and Normed Fit Index (NFI = 0.91) also suggested a good fit. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI = 0.84), was lower than the recommended threshold (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004), yet close enough to concluded that the model fits the data reasonably well. Taken together, the overall results show that the model fit the data reasonably well (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008), so it was appropriate to examine the hypotheses within the structural model. Figure 2 illustrates the estimated coefficients and their significance with regard to the structural model.

The results presented in Figure 2 clearly show that physical risk (β=0.24, t=9.26), economic risk (β=0.28, t=7.95), functional risk (β=0.20, t=8.13) and environmental awareness (β=-0.37, t=5.81) all had a significant influence on consumer resistance. Together, they explained about 62% of the variance in consumers' level of resistance. Therefore, H1, H2, H3 and H5 were supported. However, social risk (β=0.04, t=0.954) had no significant impact on consumer resistance, and thus H4 was rejected by the data. These results indicated that consumer perceived physical risk, economic risk and functional risk had positive effects on consumer resistance to adopt green innovation products; environmental awareness had a negative effect, while consumer perceived social risk had no significant influence on consumer resistance to adopt green innovation products in this study.

Figure 2: Results of Hypotheses Tests
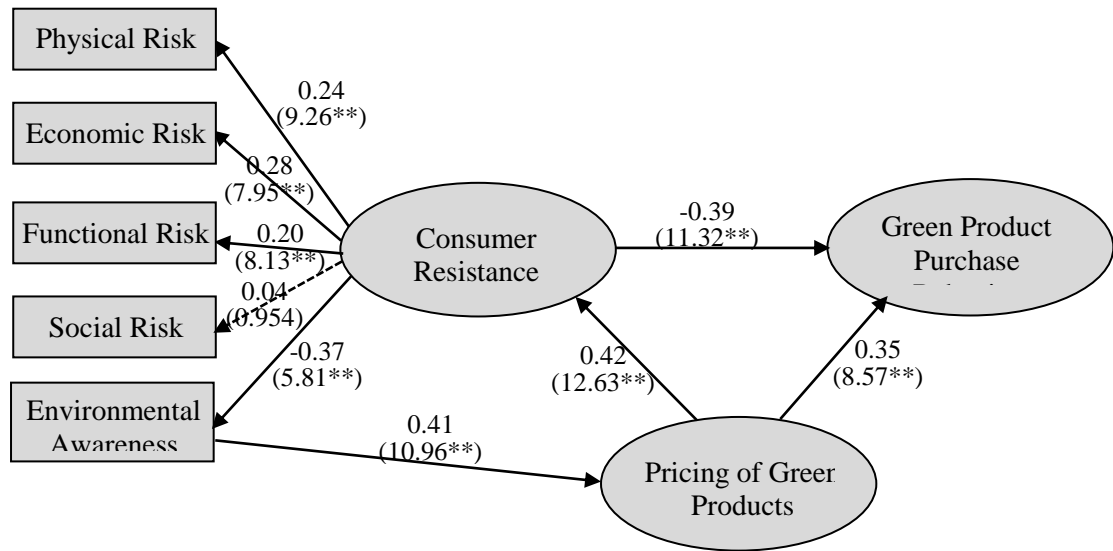
Note: $^{*}p<0.05;$ $^{**}p<0.01$

The coefficient of the causal relationship of consumer resistance to green product purchase behavior was -0.39 (t=11.32). Pricing of green products was found be positively related to consumer resistance and green product purchase behavior. The coefficients of the causal relationship were 0.42 (t=12.63) and 0.35 (t=8.57), respectively. Furthermore, environmentally concerned consumers were positively related to willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products (β=0.41, t=10.96). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a difference in buying behavior in the case of environmentally concerned consumers as compared to those who are not. In summary, regarding the relationships among consumer resistance, green product purchase behavior, and willingness to pay more for green products, H_6 was supported and H_7 was rejected.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Results

Upon cross-referencing the proposed hypotheses of our conceptual model, we confirmed that perceived risk and environmental awareness have a direct influence on consumer resistance to green innovation products when evaluating green consumer electronics, and we also found environmentally concerned consumers to be positively related to willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products. Our model provides several significant findings.

First, the study indicates that environmental awareness reflects the consumers' value finding and how it taps into their cognitive assessment of the value of environmental protection (Lee, 2009). Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) has also pointed out that individuals will always behave in concurrence to their attitudes. In addition, the results

indicated that there is difference between age groups and regions in regard to their level of environmental awareness and behavior related to green product purchasing. A large number of studies have found little or no relationship between demographic characteristics and environmental attitudes and behavior because demographic variables have less explanatory power than psychographic variables (D'Souza et al., 2007; Mostafa, 2007; Schwepker & Cornwell, 1991). Remarkably, all age groups and regions displayed relatively higher willingness for paying higher prices for green products with adolescents being the highest and adults the lowest. The amount of the premium consumers were willing to pay in the case of consumers in Hong Kong was found to be statistically significantly greater than consumers in Taiwan and China in regard to willingness to pay extra for green products. Findings from this work also suggest that the segment of consumers willing to pay more for green products in Chinese markets may be very large.

Second, it found out that most of the respondents were aware of existing environmental problems, as they scored very high on the above referenced variables, but another factor that had the lowest significance was social risk. Consumer's environmental awareness plays an important role in green purchasing behavior. The results indicated no significant relationship between consumers' attitudes toward environmental protection and their attitudes toward green products. This means that consumers' attitudes about green products are not facilitated by their positive attitudes towards environmental protection. Hence, supported by the literature, environmental awareness and green product purchase behavior seem to be more common in younger individuals. This result is consistent with the prior research findings of Mukherjee & Onel (2012). Our findings are contrary to the findings from Luo & Deng (2008) and Chen et al. (2011), which found that older respondents were found to be more environmentally positive in regard to their behavior than younger respondents.

Finally, the results of this study lead to several insights regarding the pricing of green products. Consumers are willing to pay a premium for green products, although this premium varies by product category and potential savings resulting from the purchase. Our findings on consumer electronics seem to be consistent with those of Drozdenko et al. (2011) and Ali et al. (2011); that is, consumers are willing to pay a premium for green products, but this premium is modest and is affected by potential payback. It seems that as the potential payback increased, the premium also increased. Some studies have reflected consumer hesitation to pay more for green products, as mentioned by Ali et al. (2011) and Manakatola & Jauhari (2007), while on the other hand Wanninayake & Randiwela (2008) study indicated the opposite.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The current study highlighted the fact that the level of environmental awareness among Chinese consumers is appreciable and suggested that consumers are also aware of green products available in the market. In sum, referring to our conceptualization and exploratory results, marketers might be able to understand why different groups of consumers do or do not purchase green innovations products. Overall, it can be concluded that throughout the various types of consumer resistance, perceived risk plays an important role. Therefore, risk reduction strategies are crucial in diminishing consumer resistance towards green innovation products. One such risk reduction strategy can be to ensure the availability of information to increase knowledge about potential risks and solutions. However, consumers need have complete knowledge about the environment so that they can choose products which least affect the environment. The implication of this finding is increase consumer awareness about environmental issues, which can be very well achieved through environmental education programs in schools or at the college level and through promotional appeals and campaigns by government agencies. Primary education can also play a major part in increasing environmental awareness by making students aware of environmental issues from an early age.

Thus, businesses must ensure competitive pricing strategies along with strong quality controls to attract the prospective green customers. It is possible to base appropriate strategies on our empirically verified principles to improve value for different segments of consumers, who differ in regard to their level of risk perception and attitude towards green innovations. One more imperative factor that marketers must consider is that customers are often skeptical of claims about green products; hence, organizations must guarantee that the offered environmentally friendly products perfectly meet the ecological values as defined in order to avoid customer criticism.

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