

## **THE EFFECT OF GREEN MARKETING ON LEBANESE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN RETAIL MARKET**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Green marketing is appreciated for being the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. This new concept which aims to modify and improve the behavior of consumers is widely discussed these days with a primary purpose of environmental protection. The intention of this study was to investigate the relationship between consumer's behavior and the associated environmental problems and green marketing challenges. Data analysis produced from a consumer survey in Lebanon testing the socio demographic and the external factors affecting the customer behavior, demonstrated a high level of awareness toward the importance of protecting the environment and its resources, additionally, it showed a great responsibility from the part of the Lebanese consumers who expressed their willingness to behave in a responsible manner through their involvement in ecological actions.*

**KEYWORDS:** green marketing, Lebanese consumer behavior, retail market

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The increasingly negative impacts of human activities on the environment have attracted broad attention from environmentalists, scientists and marketers to the adoption of ecological and environmentally-friendly practices. As suggested by these scholars, marketing should focus on the improvement and enhancement of the quality of life. Therefore, since the quality of life is not only about satisfying our needs and desires through purchasing goods and services, but also about the improvement of conditions related to the environmental quality on which human depends for high standards of well being, the concept of green marketing has extended this goal by seeking to improve the quality of life with a great emphasize on the conservation of the environment and its resources (Dima et Vladutescu, 2012; Vladutescu, 2012; Macriş, 2013).

According to the American Marketing Association, green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. Thus green marketing incorporates a broad range of activities, including product modification, changes to the production process, packaging changes, as well as modifying advertising. The purpose of green marketing, in addition to protecting the

environment involves consumers in a sustainable development approach. The sustainable development allows the present generation to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This article is compiled into two parts: the first part includes the theoretical framework of the research, followed by definitions of green marketing, section two of the first part reviews the characteristics of green customers and the various environmental criteria that influence their behavior. Second part is dedicated to the methodology adopted in the research, with the empirical framework describing the search results.

## **THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The popularity of the green marketing concept has developed in the 1980s (Peattie *et al.*, 2003). While there is no universally accepted definition of green marketing, many definitions were present to define the scope of this conception. Green marketing could be defined as: “the use of ecological positioning for a brand or product as a selling point, or communication on environmental activities of the company to enhance the environment brand image” (Bathelot, 2012) Economic and social science (2012) provided many ecological characteristics as the base and principles of green marketing. These characteristics include: eco-friendly raw material, recyclable or biodegradable products... or green promotions, for instance, with every purchase of green products, a tree will be planted, and a specific percentage of the money generated will be dedicated for environmentally- friendly companies, another characteristic may be focusing on environmental promises.

Fourteen years later, the concept of green marketing extended the limitations of product design and brand images, reaching more comprehensive understanding of the mutual relations between satisfying human needs and wants without compromising and damaging the environment and its natural resources. Based on this understanding, Polanski (1994) defined green marketing as “Green or Environmental Marketing which consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment”.

It is required and essential for three main parties to be involved in green marketing. First, the government as the powerful party for being able to formulate rules and regulations concerning the protection of the environment; second, companies who are forced, in one way or another, to produce and distribute products, with respect to the environmental factors; and last but not least, for consumers who act as purchaser for goods and services, should support the decisions of public authorities and firms, and more specifically, their individual decisions and their responsible behaviors can promote the protection of the environment.

### **Influence of green marketing on Lebanese consumers**

Consumers are becoming more interested and attentive toward the protection of the environment. They became more aware about the impacts caused on the environment as result to their irresponsible behavior. This understanding has been enhanced by the concept of green marketing which has influenced consumers to change their behavior in a way favorable to sustainable development. Peattie and Peattie (2009) identified a new role for sustainable marketing, which is:

encouraging consumers to adopt sustainable behavior, and consume sustainable products and services, by positioning them as usual.

*H1 : The green marketing has a positive impact on the Lebanese consumers behaviors.*

### **The green marketing mix**

Many studies have been conducted to illustrate the relation and connection between green marketing and the traditional one. Since green marketing is based on the theories of traditional marketing and uses somehow the same tools, green marketing can be considered as a communication, a production, and an ecological distribution at the same time. Because media can influence eco-consumers, green advertising is necessary since it help in persuading consumers about the importance of green marketing concept (Zaiem, 2005). Based on this fact, the second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

*H2 : Green advertising has an impact on the behavior of the Lebanese eco-consumer*

The promotion is a common tool for the green marketing and the traditional one. Eco-label or green label is one of the most important techniques in promoting environmentally friendly products; however, despite all the positive impacts and the power of green label as major influence on consumer behavior, green marketing did not achieve its objectives of environment protection and customer satisfaction (Rex and Baumann, 2006) as well as the environmentally friendly products, have not yet reached the expected level of success on the market (Zaiem, 2005). Our hypothesis is as follow:

*H3: A green promotion has a positive influence on the behavior of ecological consumer*

### **External factors influencing the Lebanese consumer**

Consumers make a purchase to satisfy their need and wants. Their behaviors vary depending on the nature of their need and the difficulty they are facing. For instance, consumers who are interested in collectivism and motivated to work in a team behave in an environmentally friendly manner and tend to respect the interest of their society. These consumers pay more attention to green marketing which take into consideration social interest (study by Ethicity in 2006). Based on this, our fourth hypothesis can be stated as following:

*H4: The social interest influences the ecological behavior of the Lebanese consumer*

We all belong to a society that influence our behaviors and determine our reactions and attitudes. Many factors and characteristics in the society can influence the behavior of consumers directly or indirectly, such as: the family, the reference group to which they belong, the culture and subculture, etc. it is worth mentioning that an individual culture affect all his/her behaviors at home, at work and in whenever place he/she is found. Culture is defined as the sum of beliefs, traditions, and customs... it is then identified as being the dominant ideology... Culture does not only influence consumers behavior but also their decision making process toward what to purchase and not to purchase. As well as the individualism, materialism, moral conviction or religious are cultural traits that guide consumption (Vernette, 2011). These factors illustrate the necessity to incorporate green marketing strategies to influence these factors in the society.

*H5 : Culture has an impact on the ecological consumer behavior.*

From a management perspective, green marketing is currently being adopted and used by firms and companies to generate profits, although in some countries the sustainable marketing is not yet applied. A direct result of the green marketing effects has appeared in the developed countries as well as in some of the developing countries such as Lebanon, where governments have become strict by imposing regulations and laws to protect the environment, its natural and cultural resources. Managing ecological marketing and the application of green marketing as a managerial tool to increase revenues, suppose a deep knowledge about the ecological market, company coordinates laws and courses mechanism that appears in this market evolution (Traistaru, 2013). So the hypothesis stated her is as follow:

*H6: Environmental laws have an influence on the behavior of the Lebanese consumers.*

### **Green consumers**

Green consumers are consumers who seek products and services that do not harm the environment. In some cases, consumers are identified by green marketing companies as hampering sustainable development because of their lack of awareness about this subject. A high percentage of customers still perceive green products as less efficient than conventional ones. It seems that consumers are not concerned about the protection of their environment and they tend to blame the industry and the government for being ineffective in this issue. On the other hand, the lack of information provided for customers about green marketing, its role and objectives prevent consumers to make a responsible choice (Durif, 2011).

*H7: Knowledge about environmental problems affects consumer behavior.*

### **Personal criteria**

In fact green consumers don't trust the effectiveness and reliability of green products. They believe that the regulations developed and implemented don't protect the environment adequately. In general, ecological consumer is an individual who consider the effect and consequences of each purchase and consumption on the environment and the society (Marguerat and Cestre, 2002). His/her sense of responsibility to the society is reflected by a positive attitude towards the consumption of green products.

Companies believe that there is a difference in the purchasing behavior based on the gender, and that products are formed according to their users. Knowing that today some products are consumed by both genders, in general males are interested in different products than females and vice versa (Moronvalle, 2013).

*H8: the sex of consumer has a positive influence on the ecological consumer behavior.*

Since customers are sensitive to the price of the product they are buying, price is considered as an influencing factor on demand. This illustrate why consumers must be confident in a rational way with enhanced information about green products, as to positively influence their purchase when

green products are expensive. However, at the time that the price has an influence on the purchasing behavior, the delivery of information is more important here and is related to the educational background of the customers; those with a weak education will find difficulties in understanding the information delivered about green products because the information are scientific in nature and includes international requirements and should then be stated in a clear way. So, the existence of products at affordable prices explains why the price of the product is not anymore a major obstacle (Durif, 2011).

*H9: The level of education has an impact on the ecological consumer behavior.*

Another socio-demographic factor affecting the consumption behavior of customers is their age. Specific types of products can be associated with every period of life. Our decision making process is affected by our age, as we grow we tend to adopt more responsible behavior (Durif, 2011). There are four age groups, for each group a behavior can be associated: young children, teenagers, young adults, and seniors. Our hypothesis generated from this fact is as following:

*H10: Age has a positive influence on the ecological behavior of the Lebanese consumers.*

Consumers, who are considered as green consumers, are those who are ready to select green products and accept to pay any price to get them. It is good to know how much does the customer willing to pay for green products. Studies have suggested that in general, consumers are willing to pay 5 to 10% more for eco-friendly products. But since customers have varying purchasing power these prices may not be favorable for all consumers. So it could be illustrated that consumer income has little or no effect on responsible consumption (Durif, 2011).

*H11: The income has an influence on the ecological Lebanese consumer behavior.*

While traditional marketing target specific products to specific consumers based on their socio-demographic characteristics such as their profession or social class, green marketing focus on environmentally friendly products targeting all types of customers with various professions and social classes with a primary purpose which is to change the traditional behavior of customers to become more responsible one.

*H12: The profession has an impact on the ecological consumer behavior.*

## **METHODOLOGY**

Our research approach is hypothetical-deductive most used in science management researches (Thietart, 2003). In this approach, we assumed that the system is structured, and the phenomenon studied is statistically measurable where variables are related. The main process steps of the hypothetical-deductive approach are: first, to introduce a theory, formulate the research hypotheses and then testing the hypotheses stated to verify if they could be validated or rejected. The main objective here is hypothesis-testing, so the indicators are identified earlier in the project and a quantitative approach through closed-questions was used to successfully estimate the validity and reliability the hypotheses. The quantitative approach is used to assess and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of Lebanese consumers toward green marketing and to study their willingness to consider the environment during consumption.

## **Sampling design**

The unit of study adopted in this research includes all Lebanese consumers aged eighteen years old and older. The sample size is 70 Lebanese consumers.

## **The data collection**

### **Primary data**

Since green marketing is a new concept and unfamiliar one in Lebanon, as well as the existing studies about this topic are limited or even do not exist. In order to achieve new and real insights and study the Lebanese consumer behavior toward green marketing, it is necessary to be involved on field studies. Our primary data are collected directly from the Lebanese consumers using a questionnaire as the study method.

### **Questionnaire**

Within the framework of our research, a survey questionnaire was used to collect information from the sample selected. The questionnaire designed includes three parts. The first part measures the Lebanese consumption behavior, this part is dedicated to identify their behavior, purchasing decisions, and to verify if these two factors are related to the environmental problems faced. In addition, this section is used to study if the Lebanese consumers are motivated not only to satisfy their needs, but also to protect the society.

The second part of the questionnaire was dedicated to identify the characteristics that may influence the ecological behavior of the Lebanese consumers, or the criteria that help in creating an environmentally friendly behavior if it does not exist. The third part included questions related to personal information of the respondents.

The types of questions used in the survey questionnaire were: dichotomous questions for the first part, 5 Likert scale for the second part, while the third part included multiple choice questions.

### **Statistical technique**

The SPSS software was used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire conducted. This software allows describing the data. Chi-square test and Phi & Cramer were used.

The chi-square test is a statistical test used for testing the suitability of a data series to a family of probability distributions or test the independence between two random variables.

The Chi-square test was used to test the non-hypothesis which estimate that there is no relation between two categorical variables. This test also measures the hypothesis of independence variables.

## **RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the relation between green marketing and consumer behavior. According to the Chi-square test, Lebanese consumers are interested in this concept, and are willing to pay a premium price to buy green products, which means that the Lebanese consumers are influenced



by green marketing. The second test, Phi and Cramer, indicates that the relation between these two variables is not very strong, since the willingness to pay a premium is related to others factors stated previously. Sometimes the consumers are interested in green products and are concerned about protecting their environment but they don't have the power to buy these products, which illustrate the reason behind this weak relation. H1 is confirmed, the green marketing influences the behavior of Lebanese consumers, and these two variables are dependent.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.111(b)	1	.000		
Continuity Correction(a)	10.896	1	.001		
Likelihood Ratio	12.024	1	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				.001	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.924	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	70				

**Table 1: The green marketing and consumption behavior.**

The second table illustrates the influence of green advertising on the consumption behavior. The Chi-square test indicates that green advertising has an impact on the purchasing behavior of the Lebanese consumers; in general publicity for green product can influence the ecological behavior of consumers. While the test of phi and Cramer proves weak relation between green advertising and green behavior, still the fact that green advertising has an influence on the behavior cannot be rejected, but the great influence is dependent on other criteria which have important role. The H2 hypothesis is validated, the green consumer behavior depends on green advertising.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.830(b)	1	.000		
Continuity Correction(a)	12.535	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	13.896	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	14.618	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	70				

**Table 2: Green advertising has an influence on the ecological behavior**

The second element of the marketing mix which was adopted in this research is the green promotion; it was used to study its impacts on the behavior of Lebanese consumer. The chi-square test indicates that there is no relation between green promotion and ecological behavior for Lebanese consumers. Green promotion means, for example, when a company decides to plant a tree with every purchase to motivate consumers to buy more. This method does not influence the consumer behavior of Lebanese consumer. The hypothesis H3 is rejected, indicating that the ecological consumer behavior does not depend on the green promotion.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.139(b)	1	.709		
Continuity Correction(a)	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.147	1	.701		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.586
Linear-by-Linear Association	.137	1	.711		
N of Valid Cases	70				

**Table 3 : Green promoting influences the ecological behavior**

Table 4 shows the influence of social interest on the buying behavior. It is clear that the Lebanese consumers are influenced by their society; the chi-square test demonstrates that there is a relation between social interest and ecological behavior. The interest of the society influences positively consumer behavior. H4 is confirmed, the ecological behavior depends on the social interest.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.786(b)	1	.005		
Continuity Correction(a)	6.127	1	.013		
Likelihood Ratio	7.234	1	.007		
Fisher's Exact Test				.010	.008
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.675	1	.006		
N of Valid Cases	70				

**Table 4: Social interest has an impact on the ecological consumer behavior**



The table presented below (table 5) measures the influence of culture on consumer behavior. According to the chi-square test, there is a relation between the culture of the society and the behavior of consumption, in other meaning the Lebanese culture motivate consumers to adopt environmentally friendly behavior, which is very logical since Lebanese consumers respect their culture which influence their daily life behavior. The hypothesis H5 is fully validated, culture influences the ecological behavior, and these two variables are dependent.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.631(a)	4	.006
Likelihood Ratio	14.837	4	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.538	1	.019
N of Valid Cases	70		

**Table 5: Culture influence the ecological behavior for Lebanese consumer**

The sixth Chi- Square test studies whether or not the consumption behavior of the Lebanese consumers is influenced by environmental laws? The chi-square test demonstrates that there is no relation between environmental laws imposed by the government, and the ecological behavior of the Lebanese consumers. We can explain this result due to the absence of an effective role of the Lebanon government, as well as environmental laws are neither well known nor effectively applied, this illustrates why the laws of the environment in Lebanon don't influence the behavior of Lebanese consumers. H6 is rejected; the laws of the environment and ecological behavior of Lebanese consumers are independent, since these laws are not applied until now in Lebanon.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.631(a)	4	.327
Likelihood Ratio	4.131	4	.389
Linear-by-Linear Association	.732	1	.392
N of Valid Cases	70		

**Table 6: The influence of environmental laws on ecological behavior**

The awareness about the environmental problems plays an important role in the purchase decision, and then on consumer behavior. We measured the influence of knowledge about the polluting substances on the consumer purchase decision. The chi-square test showed that there is a relation between knowledge of pollutants and ecological behavior; it means that Lebanese consumers are ready to stop their consumption of products containing pollutants materials. But consumers cannot

stop eating all the products that are harmful to the environment, especially when there is an absence of alternative product, which explains the current use of some unhealthy products.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.080(a)	3	.004
Likelihood Ratio	14.923	3	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.309	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	70		

**Table 7: The knowledge about substances harmful to the environment influence the behavior of Lebanese consumer**

Table 7 presents the relation between the replacement of plastic, by carton, and the ecological behavior. Lebanese consumer agreed to replace the plastic by other non-pollutant materials, causing a positive influence on the behavior and sometimes it will push them to buy more. Thus, if the products are packed by carton or other non-pollutant materials, the Lebanese consumer will prefer the former more than the latter. Phi and Cramer indicates that the relation between these two variables is not strong because some Lebanese consumer does not accept all products to be packaged with cardboard. H7 is confirmed as the result of chi-square test is less than 0.05 which implies that the ecological behavior becomes more important when companies produce green products.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.316(a)	4	.035
Likelihood Ratio	10.092	4	.039
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.002	1	.083
N of Valid Cases	70		

**Table 8: Replacing plastic by cardboard influences the purchasing behavior**

According to the results presented by the chi-square test in table 9, there is no relation between the respondents' gender and ecological behavior. Gender does not influence the consumer buying behavior, if the buyer is a woman does not indicate neither that she will consume more environmentally friendly product nor that she will be interested more in the environment, and vice versa. Hypothesis 8 is not confirmed (the result of chi-square is greater than 0.05), that's mean that gender does not influence the behavior of ecological consumer

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.611(b)	1	.204		
Continuity Correction(a)	.969	1	.325		
Likelihood Ratio	1.622	1	.203		
Fisher's Exact Test				.260	.163
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.588	1	.208		
N of Valid Cases	70				

**Table 9: Gender influences the ecological consumer behavior**

The level of education of Lebanese consumers has no relation with their buying behavior, the chi-square test shows that the behavior is not influenced by the level of education of each consumer, especially the ecological behavior since today green marketing is spread in the Lebanese society, even if it is not in the required level. Being educated or not, consumers have an idea on the principles of green marketing, which facilitates the adoption of environmentally friendly behavior. Ecological consumers may have only completed primary school, sometimes college or university. The H9 hypothesis is not confirmed, meaning that the level of education and ecological consumer behavior are independent.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.207(a)	3	.361
Likelihood Ratio	4.115	3	.249
Linear-by-Linear Association	.011	1	.917
N of Valid Cases	70		

**Table 10: The level of education has an impact on the ecological behavior**

The table below represents the relation between the age and consumer behavior. The chi-square test shows that the consumer age does not influence the his/her buying behavior, that is to say, if the consumer is young or old it does not change his/her behavior, and even does not motivate him/her to adopt an ecological behavior or avoid green products. Age plays a role in the type of products consumed, but doesn't help adopted an eco-responsible behavior. Hypothesis10 is not confirmed, it means that the age and social consumer behavior are independent.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.283(a)	4	.512
Likelihood Ratio	3.951	4	.413
Linear-by-Linear Association	.189	1	.664
N of Valid Cases	70		

**Table 11: Age of consumer influence his ecological behavior**

Table 12 shows the relation between the Lebanese consumers' income and its influence on their behavior. Age has been found as having no influence on the ecological behavior concerning the purchasing power to buy green products. The chi-square test indicates that the relation between income and environmental behavior exists but it is low. Green consumers have different level of incomes, mostly between \$ 800-1200. H11 is not validated, that is to say, income and ecological behavior of Lebanese consumers are independent.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.402(a)	4	.052
Likelihood Ratio	11.756	4	.019
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.527	1	.011
N of Valid Cases	70		

**Table 12: The income influence the ecological behavior**

The Table 13 shows that the profession does not influence the behavior of ecological consumer. The Chi-square test indicated that there is no relation between these two variables. Whatever is the profession of consumers; this doesn't change their purchasing behavior. The green consumer may belong to different professions; some are employed in the public sector, others in the private sector, or even have special work. H12 is not enabled, that is to say the two variables are independent.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.822(a)	4	.588
Likelihood Ratio	3.036	4	.552
Linear-by-Linear Association	.017	1	.896
N of Valid Cases	70		

**Table 13: Profession influences the ecological behavior**

## CONCLUSION

In light of the results obtained, it could be stated that green consumers in Lebanon are consumers of both genders, have different ages, with various job status and varying levels of educations. They are influenced by the Lebanese culture, their social interest, and the green advertising. Their ecological behavior becomes more observable when consumers know more about the environmental problems.

Green marketing is strongly influenced by the environment, that is to say Lebanese consumers are willing to change their behaviors and habits in a way acceptable by the Lebanese society. In another sense, if reference groups embrace the concept of social marketing, consumers will adopt it as well. Most consumers believe that the culture of the society influences the ecological behavior completely.

To summarize, green marketing is not very widespread in Lebanon, this is due to several reasons: some of them are related to the lack of effective government role, other reasons may be explained by the lack of sufficient consumer purchasing power, in addition to facts associated with the absence of environmental laws that protect the environment and its resources. All these reasons illustrate the non-proliferation of a good environmental behavior in Lebanon.

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