



Exploring Hedonistic Values Aspects in Pro-environmental Behaviour Among Young Adults

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Abstract. Numerous studies have examined the relationship between consumer pro-environmental behaviour and biospheric or egoistical values. For instance, biospheric values define kindness and care for the environment, whereas those who engage in pro-environmental behaviour may seek social status or a positive image that serves their egoistical values. However, less research has been conducted on the relationship between hedonistic values and pro-environmental consumer behaviour. Hedonistic values reflect the extent to which individuals take pleasure in their lives. Past research has also demonstrated a negative correlation between hedonistic values and the extent to which individuals are concerned with engaging in pro-environmental behaviour. This study is unique in its examination of the perceptions of young adults' hedonistic values and pro-environmental behaviour values. This is an exploratory study employing a qualitative research design, and the data were analysed using thematic analysis. When engaging in pro-environmental behaviours, the hedonistic value aspects that young adults described are in found two themes: (a) social interaction with others and (b) personal satisfaction when seeing a clean environment that made them feel happy. The expected contributions of this study are twofold: (a) the findings will expand our understanding of how hedonistic values may influence pro-environmental behaviour among young adults; and (b) the findings will assist relevant organisations in developing their strategic marketing communications in terms of how the campaign appeal may elicit a more favourable response in motivating young adults to engage in pro-environmental behaviours in relation to hedonistic values.

Keywords: Hedonistic values · Pro-environmental behaviour · Young adults · Campaign appeal

1 Introduction and Purpose of the Study

Past research has shown that changing consumer behaviour is difficult (for a review see [1]), especially pro-environmental behaviour is often being perceived as taxing on the individual's lifestyle [2–4]. In other words, practising environmentally conscious behaviour is unfavourable because it requires additional time and effort. Suppose, for

instance, a grocery store adopted a “no plastic” policy and required customers to bring their own shopping bags when making purchases. Some customers may find this situation challenging because they would need to prepare the shopping bag in advance each time they wish to shop at a supermarket or grocery store. Usually, customers who forget to bring their own shopping bags must pay extra for the plastic bag provided by the supermarket [5, 6].

This research is motivated to find out what makes people find the joy or pleasure when committing to the pro-environmental behaviour. Past research suggest that human always prefer to live life comfortably and have the pleasures in life of which it is known as hedonistic value [7]. Which understandably, most consumers would not commit pro-environmental behaviour because it requires greater effort to change their comfortable lifestyle [8]. Unless the behaviour in question may serve their egoistical value that focused on personal gain when committing pro-environmental behaviour [9]. As a result, it would be much easier to persuade consumers to be more environmentally conscious because the benefits of doing so are highlighted. Nonetheless, current research has picked up the interest to find out how people can have joy and pleasure when practicing sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle [2, 10]. Of which, the hedonistic value that may be emphasised in the pro-environmental messaging can ‘nudge’ or subconsciously influence consumer behaviour [1]. Particularly, this research is aiming young adults because they are well-known in emphasising hedonistic value lifestyle and also, they were perceived as easy to adopt pro-environmental behaviour as compared to other age groups [11, 12].

Nevertheless, pro-environmental behaviour should be regarded as a universal value, also known as the biospheric value of human beings who commit to protecting and preserving the environment for future generations [2, 12–14]. This is due to the fact that the majority of human activities have negative effects on the environment. As a result of human activity, greenhouse gas levels increased, causing global warming, which in turn caused environmental degradation [15]. Influential media, like National Geographic [16] has often communicated how human activity has harmed the ecosystem through pollution, overpopulation, and other factors. Therefore, a great deal of continuous debate is necessary on how consumer may need to play an active role in protecting the environment and exhibit more pro-environmental behaviours.

Two types of contributions are anticipated as a result of this preliminary research: (a) the findings will expand our understanding of how hedonistic values may affect pro-environmental behaviour among young adults; and (b) the findings will assist relevant organisations in creating their strategic marketing communications in terms of how the campaign appeal may elicit a more favourable reaction in inspiring young adults to engage in pro-environmental behaviours in relation to hedonistic values. In other words, the campaign appeal may emphasize on hedonistic values in environmentally friendly behaviours messaging, which will be effective in convincing consumers to adopt the behaviour in question.

2 Literature Review and Problem Statement

Recent studies have looked into how personal values, particularly hedonistic values, may influence pro-environmental behaviour [4, 14, 17]. However, there is a mixed finding whether personal values may positively or negatively influence pro-environmental or sustainable behaviour [14, 17]. For example, Olsen and colleagues [18] found that hedonistic value positively influences sustainable purchase behaviour, while Razzaq and colleagues [8] found that there was no association between hedonistic value and pro-environmental behaviour. Hence, this research is driven to understand how the hedonistic value may relate to the pro-environmental behaviour, also known as biospheric value [17], which described the pro-environmental behaviour of humans to care for and protect the environment from harm.

Furthermore, the United Nations (UN) has suggested that more research be done on how to increase youth engagement with environmental concerns, particularly climate change concern [19]. Although it has been mentioned previously that human is often refused to change their behaviour, it is not impossible to change consumer behaviour via messaging [1, 20]. Prior research suggests that human values play a crucial role in determining how consumers act and make decisions [2, 21]. Therefore, messaging approach that relevant to the consumer values may be influential to change their behaviour. In this case, hedonistic value is mostly prominent among young adults [3, 11, 22, 23]. As a result, this exploratory study, which uses a qualitative design, may be useful in creating campaign messaging stimuli that explains which hedonistic values aspects have the greatest influence on consumers' pro-environmental behaviour.

As mentioned previously, this study focuses on how hedonistic values, as opposed to other human values, influence pro-environmental behaviour. In comparison to egoistic values, which are frequently successful in influencing consumer pro-environmental behaviour because consumers can directly infer the personal gain when they commit the behaviour, such as saving money (e.g., lower utility bills) or looking good on others as part of social status [9, 24]. While biospheric values, which frequently emphasise doing good to the environment, have been found to be influential in determining pro-environmental behaviour among consumers [2, 12, 14]. The hedonistic value is still understudied in specific of how its influencing pro-environmental behaviour. Although hedonistic value, which placed a strong emphasis on personal pleasure and gratification, is one of the important values that past research has frequently discussed in consumer behaviour literature [21, 25].

Nonetheless, past research has found that there was null or weak association between hedonistic value in improving human life satisfaction or consumer well-being [25]. In psychology research by Cui and colleagues [26] show that the pursuit of hedonistic lifestyle can cause unethical behaviour because individuals were mostly driven with extrinsic motivation (e.g., materialism) rather than intrinsic motivation (e.g., non-materialistic). Hence, there is considerable debate as to whether hedonistic individuals will cause more harm or be more unethical towards the environment due to their materialistic values.

In spite of this, hedonistic value has been identified as one of the most prevalent values among young adults as past research suggests that they are highly hedonistic because their behaviour is more predominantly materialistic and pleasure-seeking [11].

In other words, the young ones are thought to highly emphasised a lifestyle that will give them satisfaction or happiness, although it does not mean it will improve their well-being. Hence, it is timely for us to understand what are the hedonistic values aspects that may be relevant for the young adults to perform pro-environmental behaviour.

In relation to the prior discussion, recent research conducted by Capstick and colleagues [27] suggests that environmentally conscious behaviour has a positive influence on the well-being or happiness of consumers in seven different countries (e.g., Denmark, Poland, United Kingdom, Brazil, China, India and South Africa). As a result, we assumed that behaviour that was friendly to the environment not only benefited the planet, but also the wellbeing of individual consumers. It is high time that we investigate the ways in which young adults might be more inspired to be more environmentally conscious. In addition, young adults are not only known for the hedonistic behaviour, but they are also exhibiting strong pro-environmental behaviour as compared to other age groups [12].

3 Research Questions

Combining the insights previously, it appears that when consumers engage in behaviour that is good for the environment, they will experience some level of satisfaction or happiness (i.e., subjective well-being). However, it is still unclear whether or not hedonistic values, which prioritise human happiness and contentment over other considerations, will result in environmentally conscious behaviour. In light of this, the research question that will be addressed in this exploratory study is as follows:

RQ1 How hedonistic value explain young adults' pro-environmental behaviour?

4 Research Methods and Data Collection

We used qualitative research methods, and the data that was acquired for this study came from young adults participating in a focus group discussion. This allowed us to answer the research question that was posed for the study. For the purpose of this preliminary study, the researchers have invited five university students who are in their early 20s to the online focus group discussion. In particular, the researchers utilised the Cisco Webex virtual conferencing tool, which is capable of automatically transcribing the data associated with speech. Despite this, as part of the process of cleaning up the data, the researchers have rectified a few phrases that were not recorded in an accurate manner by the Cisco Webex application. In order to make the data clean enough to use for the process of thematic analysis. The steps of the thematic analysis include transcribing, reading, becoming familiar with, and coding the full data set. Other phases include searching for themes, analysing themes and subthemes, recognising themes, and labelling themes [28–30].

Since this is a preliminary study exploring how hedonistic value can be further explained in pro-environmental behaviour among young adults, the focus group discussion is the most appropriate method of data collection, as participants are more likely to share their thoughts and feelings during the discussion [31]. Prior research also indicates that focus group discussions are quite helpful, particularly when it comes to elucidating

Table 1. Research Participants' Information

Participant	Code Name	Age	Semester	Gender	Nationality
Student 1	Z	24	6	Male	Malaysia
Student 2	A	22	4	Male	Malaysia
Student 3	R	22	6	Female	Indonesia
Student 4	J	23	6	Female	Malaysia
Student 5	I	21	4	Female	Indonesia

the perspectives of young adults who are also enrolled in higher education [32]. The students come from a variety of various countries; three of them from Malaysia, and the other two come from Indonesia. The participation of people of varying nationalities in this study is necessary in depicting how universally applicable it is to speak about environmentally responsible behaviours across Southeast Asian nations. In spite of this, there was not a significant amount of diversity among the pupils in terms of their religious background, as they are all Muslims. As a result, the culture of Muslims in Malaysia and also Indonesia is not all that unlike to one another. The information regarding the people who participated in the research is provided in Table 1.

The students were given instructions at the start of the discussion with the focus group that instructed them to first introduce themselves and then answer each question by taking turns. The discussion lasted for over two hours. As a result, each student is allowed to freely contribute their thoughts and ideas without being interrupted. The literature review was used to create the guided questions, which will also be included in the “interview protocol.” For instance, the students are required to provide responses to a number of questions that can be developed into the research theme, such as those concerning hedonistic values, pro-environmental behaviour, hedonistic values combined with pro-environmental behaviour, and ideas. For example, the questions on hedonistic values were asked about what activities give them pleasure or fun, and how they self-indulge and enjoy living their lives. The pro-environmental behaviour question, on the other hand, inquired as to what they knew about performing pro-environmental behaviour and how they could have fun while doing so. That was the question that was most important to answering the research question.

5 Findings and Discussion

In this section, we present the data results and discuss the findings in order to answer the study's research question. The findings specifically present what aspects of hedonistic value explain pro-environmental behaviour among young adults. In other words, how will young adults find enjoyment when engaging in environmentally friendly behaviours? The following are some of the themes that emerged from the focus group discussion:

5.1 Young Adults Found Joy When Having Social Interaction with Peers

Our research findings derived from the focus group discussion suggest that social behaviour is very influential in terms of how consumers can change their behaviour. In the evolutionary psychology research, human is an innate social creature and very attentive to the environmental cues [33, 34]. Hence, our research found that young adults will be more motivated and feeling joyful when they commit pro-environmental behaviour, especially if they can have the social interactions with others.

The findings also relate to the modern interpretation of hedonism value that are mostly about ‘attitudinal pleasure’ instead of ‘sensory pleasure’ [7]. The ‘attitudinal pleasure’ is about how people gain pleasure by committing to favourable attitude that gives them pleasure and enjoyment [7, 35]. Favourable attitude in this case can be defined as doing good to environment. While ‘sensory pleasure’ is something innate or natural that defines how human get pleasure by their sensory and feeling, but it is subjective to each individual’s sense [35]. Past research argued that hedonistic value should also be perceived as something as simple as what makes people feels happy based on the attainment of intrinsic value, such as forming friendship and develop new knowledge [7, 35].

Although, some other research suggest that hedonism should not be based on attitudes [36]. Our results suggest that the hedonism value is more fitting to the modern interpretation as discussed previously. The young adults in the study really emphasised on social behaviour or social connections with others in order to feel good and happy while committing to the environmentally friendly behaviour. Given that committing to pro-environmental activity such as volunteerism to clean school or cleaning the beach, the students are forming new attitudes and behaviour that they also found it meaningful and enjoy doing it. For instance, Student 4 mentioned that “*the best part of doing the (pro-environmental) activity is when we get to communicate with others and have fun*” while Student 2 explained “*I think everyone should participate and give cooperation when it comes to doing it (pro-environmental habit), it will be more enjoyable*”. All other participants were agreed with these sentiments.

Hence, the hedonistic aspects in explaining the motivation to commit to pro-environmental behaviour is mostly about the social interaction among peers that gives a great joy to these students. The finding of this research is also extending past research that did not include the hedonistic values in examining how social interaction among adults that may positively influence pro-environmental behaviour [13]. The implication of our findings can be extended to be explored in future study such as experimental research, particularly the ones that developed advertising or messaging stimuli. Specifically, the concept of hedonism value that emerges from this focus group discussion aligns more closely with the modern interpretation of hedonism, which emphasises social engagement while exhibiting positive attitudes.

5.2 Personal Satisfaction When Seeing Clean Environment

On a personal level, students felt a sense of accomplishment when they saw the differences that they could see when the environment was cleaned out. A clean environment can be perceived as beautiful as compared to dirty and unkept environment. Past research

suggest that beautiful environment contributes to positive emotions (e.g., happiness) [37, 38]. This is also due to the fact that beautiful things contribute to the positive awe (e.g., admiration) among consumers [39, 40].

Hence, we may infer that the desire to see and live in a clean environment is based on necessity rather than desire. To relate our findings with hedonism values, past research suggests that ‘satisfaction of needs’ is more commonly associated with traditional hedonism than with modern hedonism [41, 42]. Traditional hedonism is defined by physical consumption or reality depiction, whereas modern hedonism is defined by dreams and fantasies as discussed by Gram-Hanssen and colleagues [41]. As a result, when a student needs to live in a clean environment, they must take action to see that the environment changes for better. Student 2, for example, explained “*it was very pleasing and satisfying to see the environment that I helped cleaned, before and after*”.

Previous research has looked into the relationship between hedonism and cleanliness, though it has mostly focused on the retail shopping environment rather than the natural environment [43]. To date, the literature is inadequate in explaining how the hedonism concept can be induced by a beautiful environment and the act of cleaning it as part of consumer satisfaction and happiness. Nonetheless, it is human nature to want to live in a clean and beautiful environment that gives them the pleasure of life, despite the fact that human activities are primarily responsible for environmental damage [10, 16]. For example, Malaysia and Indonesia are two neighbouring nations that produce the most plastic waste on planet, specifically in the ocean [44]. Student 3 also keeps mentioning that the beaches has so many plastics and urging the action to cleaning the beach. Specifically, Student 3 said that “*Young people love beach and cleaning it (the beach) should be the priority so that it will stay beautiful*”. There is a relation between the concept of appreciating the beauty of life or nature, as part of hedonistic values. Past research has discussed about how human appreciate beauty and this is part of hedonism [45].

As a result, our second finding could have implications for future research into the effect of messaging stimuli that emphasise positive framing, such as promoting positive messages or photos/video of beautiful environments, on pro-environmental behaviour. This is also intended to inherently motivate consumers to want to see the environment remain beautiful. Because it corresponds to their hedonism value of wanting to see a clean and beautiful environment that gives them pleasure.

6 Conclusion and Suggestions

Existing literature has discussed the importance of protecting the environment for human survival and the planet (for a review see [46]). Furthermore, past research suggests that engaging in pro-environmental behaviour will improve consumer well-being. This preliminary research has looked at how hedonistic values may be explained in terms of pro-environmental behaviour among young adults. In other words, we investigated what makes consumers feel joy and happiness while performing pro-environmental behaviour. Past research indicates that hedonistic value is mostly prevalent among consumers because we are drawn to seek pleasure [1, 2, 10] especially young adults who prioritise hedonistic lifestyle [11]. Hence, it is highly importance for us to understand

what makes people find joy in pro-environmental behaviour so that this behaviour will be encouraged and as one of the motivations among consumers to be more environmentally friendly.

This research uses qualitative design to answer research questions. Based on the findings, we found two themes that revealed the hedonistic value that young adults feel when they are performing pro-environmental behaviour. First, we found that young adults find pleasure in social engagement with peers when they are practising pro-environmental behaviour. This finding has extended past research that did not explore the hedonistic perspectives in terms of “attitudinal pleasure” [7] in pro-environmental behaviour. Such that, these young adults felt satisfied and happy when they do good and engaging with like-minded peers who are also exhibit pro-environmental behaviours.

Second, we found that, on a personal level, these young adults feel satisfied when they see a cleaned environment, but only after they have performed the cleaning. In this case, they are fulfilling the ‘satisfaction of needs’ [41, 42] to live in a clean environment. Such satisfaction is more suitable for traditional hedonism, but yet, these hedonistic aspects of the satisfaction of cleaning the environment are not being discussed enough in literature. Nonetheless, the findings of the research will need to be examined in future research, particularly experimental survey design that may tested how the hedonistic values aspects that were found in this research may positively influence pro-environmental behaviour.

Another suggestion for future research is that the consumer segments may also include other age groups, not just young adults, as it is to examine how the hedonistic value messaging could influence consumer behaviour in the context of pro-environmental behaviour. Therefore, the use of hedonistic value in the campaign appeal can be generalised to a population. In this study, we have included young adults, although in small numbers, because they are the representatives of the young adults’ voices from Malaysia and Indonesia. From the focus group discussion data that we gathered, there were not so many differences between these two nations. As the informants kept agreeing with each other’s views on hedonistic values and pro-environmental behaviour, this is perhaps due to the fact that the informants are all of the same religion, which is Islam. Although bigger samples of data needed to be examined to see how these propositions played out in quantitative design research. Particularly, in order to predict how hedonistic values are positively or negatively influence pro-environmental behaviour among consumers.

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