







# Exploring the Intention-Behavior Gap: A Qualitative Study on Malaysian Consumers' Adoption of Green Cosmetic Products

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**Abstract.** The global demand for natural and organic cosmetics has grown significantly, driven by raising environmental awareness and consumer preferences for sustainable products. In Malaysia, a culturally diverse market with increasing ecological concerns, the adoption of green cosmetic products presents both opportunities and challenges. Despite consumers' positive attitudes towards eco-friendly products, perception of higher costs often deter purchase, creating an intention-behavior gap. This study explores the underlying factors influencing Malaysian consumer's adoption of green cosmetic products through a qualitative research design. Semi-structure interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insights into consumer motivation, perceptions, and purchasing behaviors. The findings reveal that access to information, promotional incentives, and perceived product value act as driver encouraging consumers to choose green cosmetic, while brand loyalty plays a vital role in bridging the intention-behavior gap. A conceptual framework was developed to illustrate these dynamics within Malaysia's socio-economic context. The study offers practical implications for marketers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders seeking to promote sustainable consumption in the cosmetics sectors.

**Keywords:** green cosmetics, purchase intention, intention-behavior gap.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background of Study

The popularity of sustainable and environmentally responsible beauty products has surged in recent years, driving a wave of transformation in consumer choices within the cosmetics industry. This study seeks to provide a deeper examination of Malaysian consumers' purchase intentions toward green cosmetic products, highlighting the diverse and interrelated factors that guide decision-making in this expanding sector.

Cosmetics have long been integral to daily grooming practices, particularly among women, serving both aesthetic and hygienic purposes. In the pursuit of

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flawless appearance, many overlook the potential health risks posed by conventional cosmetics. Under Malaysia's Guidelines for Control of Cosmetic Products, cosmetics are defined as external use substances applied for cleansing, perfuming, altering appearance, reducing body odor, or offering protection. The Malaysia market therefore encompasses a broad range of items, including soaps, skincare, hair-care, and hygiene products. In recent years, the industry has witnessed a notable shift towards natural and organic alternatives, spurred by increased awareness of personal health and environmental sustainability [5].

Growing environmental awareness has been a powerful catalyst for changes in consumer behavior, leading to stronger demand for eco-friendly products [30]. The concept of "green cosmetics" varies widely in definition, covering everything from formulations designed to reduce ecological impact [27] to those using natural ingredients such as fruit extracts [40]. Generally, these products avoid harsh chemicals and preservatives, opting instead for biodegradable packaging, recycle plastics, and glass containers [32].

On a global scale, the natural and organic cosmetics market was valued at USD 34.5 billion in 2018 and is forecasted to reach USD 54.5 billion by 2027[42], reflecting consumers' growing preference for environmentally conscious beauty solutions. Within Malaysia, a diverse consumer base paired with rising ecological awareness has created a fertile market for green cosmetics. Government policies and public interest in sustainability have encouraged brands to invest in innovation. More than a passing trend, green cosmetics serve multiple functions; enhancing brand image, addressing consumer concerns over harmful ingredients, and improving product quality. Educational campaign has further amplified awareness, alerting consumers to the health and environmental risks associated with conventional cosmetics and accelerating the growth of the sustainable cosmetics sector.

According to PreScouter [33], the green cosmetics market spans 58 distinct product lines across categories such as organic, vegan, cruelty-free, biobased, and naturally sourced. While vegan and cruelty-free lines dominate, further opportunities exist in areas like biodegradable formulations and the incorporation of renewable plant-and bacteria-based materials. The integration of recycled by-products into cosmetic ingredients and packaging offer additional promise for industry development.

Despite these positive strides, significant challenges remain. One pressing issue is "greenwashing." Illustrated by controversies such as the Innisfree case, which raised doubts about the credibility of environmental claims in cosmetics [48]. Another complication is the "intention-action gap" where consumer attitudes in favor of sustainability do not always translate into actual purchases [50]. Price perception is also a recurring barrier; many views green cosmetics as more expensive, which leads some consumers to abandon eco-friendly preferences in favor of lower-cost alternatives [12].

Against this backdrop, Malaysia's unique socio-economic and cultural setting provides a rich environment for examining consumer intentions in adopting green cosmetics. By exploring the motivations and barriers influencing these decisions,

this study aims to offer valuable insights for academics, industry players and policymakers working to shape the future of sustainable beauty in Malaysia.

## **2 Literature Review**

Two theoretical perspectives serve as the foundation for analyzing consumer perceptions and behaviors in the green cosmetics sector. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a structured lens for examining individual-level influences, while the Green Trust and Skepticism Model highlight the dynamics of credibility and doubt in evaluating eco-friendly claims. Taken together, these frameworks offer a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and social processes shaping consumer decisions regarding green cosmetics.

### **2.1 Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a widely recognized psychological framework used to explain and predict human behavior. It suggests that a person's behavioral intention is strongest predictor of whether the action will actually take place. According to TPB, three core elements shape intention: attitude toward the behavior (perceived social pressures from significant others), and perceived behavioral control (the degree to which an individual feels capable of performing the behavior).

### **2.2 Application to Green Cosmetics**

Research by [53] applied TPB to the context of natural cosmetic purchasing. Their study revealed that consumer decisions are influenced by factors across all three TPB dimension. Attitudes encompass views about using eco-friendly cosmetics, choosing them over traditional products, and linking purchases to a healthy lifestyle. Subjective norms include encouragement or disapproval from family members, peers, professionals and broader social networks. Meanwhile, perceived behavioral control relates to practical enablers and barriers such as the convenience of online shopping, access to recommendations, commitment to sustainable living, as well as obstacles like high prices, long distances, doubts about product effectiveness, lack of knowledge, or insufficient certification standards.

### **2.3 Relevancy to this study**

TPS is highly applicable to the present research as it offers a systematic way to examine how personal beliefs, social expectations, and perceived constraints shape consumer decisions in the green cosmetics market. It also sheds light on the intention-behavior gap the disconnect between wanting to purchase eco-friendly cosmetics and actually doing so. By considering these elements, businesses can tailor marketing and awareness strategies to better align with consumers' motivations and perceived challenges,

### **2.4 Green Trust and Skepticism Model**

The Green Trust and Skepticism Model expands upon general consumer trust theory by focusing specifically on environmentally branded products. It acknowledges that while consumers may be receptive to green claims, skepticism often arises due to practices like greenwashing, where companies exaggerate their eco-friendly efforts. The model underscores that trust plays a central role in reducing doubts, fostering credibility, and positively influencing purchase intentions for green products.

### **2.5 Application to Green Cosmetics**

Study by [24] illustrates the model's relevance in the natural cosmetics sector. Their findings showed that greenwashing significantly impacts consumer trust, heightens perceptions of risk and increases skepticism, all of which weaken the likelihood of purchase. Conversely, when consumers perceived a brand as reliable, recall positive past experiences, and recognize genuine environmental concern, their trust is reinforced, ultimately encouraging adoption of green cosmetics.

### **2.6 Relevancy to this study**

This model is particularly valuable for understanding Malaysian consumers' perceptions of naturalness and authenticity in cosmetics. It highlights the delicate balance between skepticism and trust, emphasizing how transparent communication, credible certifications, and alignment with consumer values can strengthen confidence and purchasing intentions. Addressing skepticism is therefore not only a challenge but also an opportunity for businesses to differentiate themselves and build lasting relationships with eco-conscious consumers.

## **3 Research Method**

### **3.1 Research Paradigm**

This study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, which aligns with the qualitative nature of the research. Interpretivism emphasizes exploring how individuals construct meaning from their experiences and recognized that each person holds unique perspectives and realities [13][14]. In this context, the interpretivist approach enables a deeper understanding of consumers' purchase intentions toward green cosmetic products in Malaysia. Rather than focusing on generalizations, it highlights the richness of individual experiences and situates knowledge within the realities of the participants themselves [43].

From an ontological perspective, the study acknowledges that reality is subjective and varies among individuals. Each participant contributes a distinct understanding of a green cosmetic based on personal experiences and values [13][14]. Epistemologically, the research seeks to capture these truths through open-ended interviews and questionnaires, allowing participants to freely express their perceptions. Ideologically, the study values personal judgements and beliefs, particularly in relation to how participants' intentions and choices are influenced. The focus on both current users and potential buyers of green cosmetics in Malaysia reflects the objective of capturing diverse insights into consumer intentions within this specific cultural and social setting.

### **3.2 Research Design**

A qualitative exploratory design was chosen to investigate consumer intentions and perception in detail. Exploratory research is particularly suitable when addressing topics that remain underexplored, as it allows flexibility in probing into the complexity of human behavior [42]. The aim is not to provide definitive conclusions but to generate in-depth insights and uncover patterns that may guide future research or industry practices.

This approach is supported by earlier studies such as [24][54], which also used qualitative designs to study natural cosmetics. The inductive nature of this research allows findings to emerge directly from participants' narratives, ensuring a close connection between research objectives and results. Furthermore, adopting a cross-sectional timeframe enabled the researcher to examine consumers' perceptions and intentions at a specific point in time, capturing a snapshot of evolving behaviors in Malaysia's green cosmetics market.

### 3.3 Data Collection

The study addresses an existing research gap by investigating consumer's understanding and perceptions of green cosmetic products. Since prior studies have not sufficiently examined the hidden factors influencing these purchase intentions, a semi-structured interview method was employed. This approach provided flexibility in both the order and content of questions, making it possible to adapt based on participants' responses and to explore emerging themes during the conversation [40]. As notes by [49], the open-ended nature of such interviews avoids restricting responses to the researcher's preconceived notions, ensuring a more authentic exploration.

Data collection took place in January 2024 through five semi-structured virtual interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. These platforms offered practical benefits, such as maximizing the need for in-person meetings and saving time and resources [10] [36]. At the same time, potential limitations, such as unstable internet connections, camera positioning, or audio quality, were acknowledged. To mitigate these risks, participants were briefed in advances about technical requirement to ensure smooth sessions.

Sampling combined purposive and convenience techniques, Purposive sampling targeted individuals in Malaysia who had either purchased or shown interest in green cosmetics, ensuring relevance to the research focus [48]. Convenience sampling, on the other hand, allowed the inclusion of participants from the researcher's personal network family, friends, and colleagues, given the time and cost constraints. The final sample consisted of five participants with varying level of experience with green cosmetics (Refer to Table 1).

**Table 1.** Details of participants' profiles

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Green Cosmetic User
Participant 1	Female	41	Yes
Participant 2	Male	29	Yes
Participant 3	Female	38	Yes
Participant 4	Female	29	Yes
Participant 5	Female	30	No

Demographic details of age and gender were collected primarily to differentiate participants but were not central to the analysis. The key variable was whether or not the participants had experience using green cosmetics.

The interviews were guided by open-ended questions aimed at uncovering changes in purchase intentions, as well as the reasons behind those changes. Follow-up probing questions were used whenever initial responses required further clarification. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, with English as the medium of communication. To ensure accuracy, interviews were recorded, supported by field notes, and later transcribed using automated tools in Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. Transcripts were subsequently checked and corrected manually. All participants gave informed consent, and anonymity was guaranteed by omitting personal identifiers and securely storing the data.

This systematic approach to data collection ensured that the study produced rich, credible and detailed insights into the factors influencing Malaysian consumers' purchase intentions toward green cosmetic products.

## 4 Data Analysis

This study employed a grounded theory approach, supported by the constant comparative method to examine consumers' purchasing intention toward green cosmetics. Grounded theory, unlike other qualitative designs, focuses heavily on developing theoretical insights from systematically gathered data [11]. [47] emphasize that grounded theory relies on repeated cycles of data collection, refinement, and categorization to build theory. Within this framework, ongoing comparisons and theoretical sampling are essential strategies for constructing robust findings [9][27][47].

To complement grounded theory, thematic analysis was also used to extract meaning from the interview data. [9] describe thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns across textual data. In this study, it was applied by breaking down transcripts into smaller content units, which were then categorized inductively (from the data itself) and deductively (from existing frameworks).

The constant comparative method was particularly valuable in ensuring that codes and categories were continuously refined as new data emerged. According to [48], this method requires researchers to simultaneously code and analyze allowing theory to evolve organically. According to [11], the approach blends systematic data collection, coding, and theoretical sampling to generate findings that remain closely tied to the raw data while being expressed clearly enough for later validation. Furthermore, [20] outlined four iterative stages of the process; comparing incidents across categories, integrating categories and their attributes, delimiting the scope of the emerging theory, and writing the theory.

Through this structured process, raw data evolved into refined codes and categories that form the basis for theoretical insights. [27] highlights that while this process is rigorous and time intensive, it allows for the emergence of grounded, meaningful theory.

#### 4.1 Comparing Incidents Applicable to Each Category

The first stage, open coding, involved analyzing transcripts independently. Initially, discrepancies arose as some codes were taken too literally from participants' words, which others overlapped in meaning. To address this, the researcher re-reviewed all five transcripts collaboratively, resolving disagreements and refining the codes.

From this process, 40 preliminary codes were generated. As analysis progressed, these were reviewed repeatedly and refined further. For example, overly specific codes were relabeled for clarity: "Complex website" became "Website inconvenient", and "Expensive" was reframed as "High price". Codes with similar meanings, such as "Bad Experience," "Good experience," and "Worth to buy", were consolidated under the broader theme of "Experiences." After refinement, a total of 24 final codes were retained.

#### 4.2 Integrating Categories and Their Properties

The next stage, axial coding, grouped the refined open codes into six broader categories; relationship with brands, perception of green cosmetics, awareness of green cosmetics, recommendations from others, online and in-store purchasing and barriers.

Finally, through selective coding, these categories were consolidated into two overarching themes; brand loyalty (emerging from relationships with brands) and the intention-behavior gap (encompassing attitudes, awareness, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control, including purchasing channels, and barriers).

#### 4.3 Delimiting the theory

The theoretical model underpinning this study draws primarily on [2] Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), extended to incorporate brand loyalty and the intention-behavior gap.

Attitudes refer to an individual's psychological evaluation of the benefits or drawbacks of purchasing eco-friendly products [2]. This includes both cognitive and emotional responses to green cosmetics, such as concerns for health and the environment.

Subjective norms reflect perceived social pressures, where consumers align their actions with what family, peers, or social groups deem acceptable [2].

Perceived behavioral control captures how easy or difficult consumers perceived it to be to purchase green cosmetics, factoring in access, affordability and convenience.

The study also integrates brand loyalty as a significant construct. Defined as a consumer consistent commitment to repurchasing preferred products from the same brand [55], brand loyalty can strongly influence decision-making. Even when consumers hold positive attitudes towards sustainability, loyalty to specific trusted brand can shape their ultimate purchasing choices.

By combining TPB with brand loyalty, the study provides a more nuanced theoretical framework that explains not only why consumers form favorable intentions but also the reason these intentions do not always result in actual purchases.

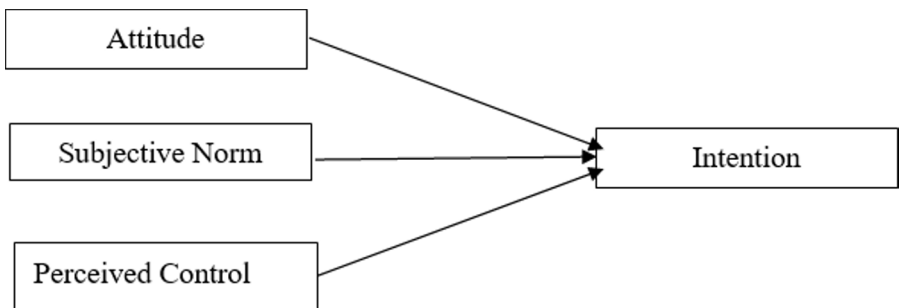
#### 4.4 Writing the theory

The final stage linked the findings back to the broader literature. The selective codes of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control align directly with [2] TPB (Figure 1), which argues that these three constructs collectively shape behavioral intentions and subsequent actions. This supported by prior studies such as [4], who examined eco-friendly product purchase intentions among Jordanian women, and [37] who studied factors affecting green cosmetics consumption.

Furthermore, the concept of brand loyalty is essential in addressing the intention-behavior gap. As defined by [56], loyalty represents a long-term commitment to particular brands, and it significantly shapes consumer habits in niche markets like green cosmetics. Despite growing demand for natural products, the market remains limited and this study highlights the reasons behind such gaps.

The intention-behavior gap, noted in behavioral theories [18] [41] [43], shows that stated intentions do not always translate into practice. In the context of green cosmetics, this gap is influenced by multiple factors, including expectations of performance, brand relationships, environmental attitudes, and perceptions of product effectiveness [29]

**Figure 1** Research Model Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)



Overall, the analysis synthesizes the Theory of Planned Behavior with brand loyalty and the intention-behavior gap to construct a comprehensive explanation of consumer behavior in Malaysia's green cosmetics market. This integrated framework highlights the reasons consumer may express a willingness to purchase eco-friendly products but fail to act on those intentions, while also underlining the role of loyalty in bridging this divide.

## 5 Result and Findings

Analysis of the interview data uncovered two clear shifts shaping Malaysians' intentions to purchase green cosmetics. Together, these shifts illuminate how decision-making is evolving in this category.

First, greater information access is closely tied to a stronger willingness to buy. Participants highlighted multiple sources; Watsons, Guardian, Sephora's web-

site or application, and especially TikTok, as places where they learn about ingredients, benefits, and product performance. While brick-and-mortar stores provided general information, short-form videos and brand/influencer explainers online were viewed as more detailed and persuasive. This points to rising demand for transparency about formulation, efficacy, and sustainability attributes, with social platforms playing a central awareness-building role. Illustrative participant perspectives included:

**Table 2** Details of participants’ perspectives

<i>Participant ID</i>	<i>Participant Perspective</i>
<i>Participant 1</i>	<i>Some said pharmacy chains provide “just enough” basics for an on-the-spot purchase, but not deep product knowledge.</i>
<i>Participant 2</i>	<i>Others felt TikTok is “highly effective” for understanding ingredients, effects, and how to purchase in-app.</i>
<i>Participant 3</i>	<i>Several described supplementing store visits with web searches for official product pages</i>
<i>Participant 4</i>	<i>Sephora’s digital green labels were cited as a helpful cue for identifying eco-aligned options.</i>
<i>Participant 5</i>	<i>A participant emphasized the need to raise public awareness of green cosmetics overall</i>

These observations align with prior research that positions social media as a powerful driver of green-cosmetic knowledge and intent [35]. Other studies similarly show that awareness of harms linked to non-green alternatives nudges consumers toward eco-friendly choices [33], and that packaging acts as a strategic communication device for signaling sustainability [23]. For practice, this suggests brands should proactively close information gaps and leverage packaging cues to support informed, values-consistent choices.

Second, participants reported a stronger price-sensitivity, with promotions and discounts decisively shaping purchase decisions.

**Table 3** Details of participants’ perspectives

<i>Participant ID</i>	<i>Participant Perspective</i>
<i>Participant 4</i>	<i>One participant noted paying far below list price during a sale (e.g., ~25% off), which made the product “worth it.”</i>

<i>Participant 5</i>	<i>Another prefers Shopee over official sites because vouchers and promo bundles make purchases more attractive.</i>
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Platforms that aggregate deals (e.g., Shopee) were repeatedly preferred, underscoring the effectiveness of price promotions, vouchers, and event-based discounts in motivating purchase—consistent with marketing findings on the role of sales incentives [6]. A related concern raised was the presence of illicit or unverified cosmetics on social channels, indicating a need for tighter enforcement and consumer education. Strategic use of eWOM can help offset misinformation and spotlight verified green benefits [25]. Overall, the selective codes that emerged were the intention–behavior gap and brand loyalty. Their subcomponents are elaborated below.

### 5.1 Selective Code 1 - Intention–Behavior Gap

Drawing on [2] and [41], this code captures how intentions do not always translate into action, even when attitudes are favorable.

#### 5.1.1 Attitude

This sub-category reflects psychological evaluations of green cosmetics. Two axial codes surfaced: perceptions of green products and awareness of green products.

##### *Perceptions of Green Cosmetics*

Participants frequently linked green products with tangible benefits—softer hair, calmer skin, or better moisturization—and showed heightened ingredient scrutiny and eco-concern. Some said they would prefer the green option when performance is equivalent; if not, effectiveness prevails. Others mentioned specific “green” brands they use (e.g., Kiehl’s), albeit with differing levels of confidence about what counts as truly green. These views mirror broader consumer trends of seeking natural ingredients and avoiding synthetic risk [51].

##### *Awareness of Green Cosmetics*

Awareness levels varied. Participants cited in Table 4.

**Table 4** Details of participants’ perspectives

<i>Participant ID</i>	<i>Participant Perspective</i>
<i>Participant 1</i>	<i>Founders’ livestreams (e.g., TikTok Lives) as persuasive explainers.</i>
<i>Participant 2</i>	<i>Plant-based actives (aloe vera, tea tree, argan) as “signals” of naturalness</i>
<i>Participant 3</i>	<i>A growing social expectation to “choose sustainable.”</i>

<i>Participant 4</i>	<i>The usefulness of app-level “green badges,” compared to ambiguous in-store labels.</i>
<i>Participant 5</i>	<i>A perception that green products are expensive, shaping value judgments</i>

These patterns indicate that information, values, price perceptions, and retail context jointly inform awareness, core levers for marketing communication in Malaysia.

**5.1.2 Subjective Norm**

Subjective norm refers to perceived social pressures to act in line with reference groups. Participants described recommendations from family, friends, staff, and online communities as Table 5 below:

**Table 5** Details of participants’ perspectives

<i>Participant ID</i>	<i>Participant Perspective</i>
<i>Participant 1</i>	<i>Family initiated product trials.</i>
<i>Participant 2</i>	<i>Peers validated choices for face wash and serums.</i>
<i>Participant 3</i>	<i>Store associates encouraged sampling organic alternatives.</i>
<i>Participant 4</i>	<i>Online discovery preceded efficient in-store purchases.</i>
<i>Participant 5</i>	<i>Peer reviews and positive ratings were influential</i>

These dynamics suggest brands should activate interpersonal influence via credible reviews, UGC, expert endorsements, and social proof to reinforce norms favoring green options.

**5.1.3 Perceived Behavioral Control**

Perceived control encompasses the ease/difficulty of buying green cosmetics across channels and the barriers that constrain action.

Online and In-Store Purchasing

Participants toggled between online convenience (TikTok, Shopee) and physical stores (Watsons, Sephora, salons). Key enablers included in Table 6 below:

**Table 6** Details of participants’ perspectives

<i>Participant ID</i>	<i>Participant Perspective</i>
<i>Participant 1</i>	<i>Rich explainer content and lower prices online.</i>

<i>Participant 2</i>	<i>Pharmacies for mainstream options; TikTok for local brands.</i>
<i>Participant 3</i>	<i>Salons for specialist products.</i>
<i>Participant 4</i>	<i>App-based green labels aiding identification.</i>
<i>Participant 5</i>	<i>Vouchers and promotions driving e-commerce preference.</i>

### Barriers

Constraints spanned verification, performance, price, labeling clarity, and awareness illustrated as Table 7 below:

**Table 7** Details of participants' perspectives

<i>Participant ID</i>	<i>Participant Perspective</i>
<i>Participant 1</i>	<i>Difficulty confirming whether products are “truly” green amid crowded claims.</i>
<i>Participant 2</i>	<i>Benefits may accrue slowly, and supply continuity can be an issue.</i>
<i>Participant 3</i>	<i>Green options are perceived as costlier than conventional counterparts.</i>
<i>Participant 4</i>	<i>In-store signage often fails to clearly flag green credentials</i>
<i>Participant 5</i>	<i>General public awareness remains limited; brands should invest more in education.</i>

These map onto usage, value, risk, tradition, and image barriers [28] as well as Ajzen's enabling conditions, suggesting a dual focus on clear standards or certifications and price or value framing.

### 5.2 Selective Code 2 -Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a sustained commitment to repurchase from favored brands emerged strongly [59]. Trust, reliability, and consistent outcomes foster devotion and shorter decision cycles [38]. Participants referenced relationships with Simple, Dr. Anne, Hairos, Debella, Axis-Y, Naturals Organic, Kiehl's, and Sephora's green-marked lines. These ties illustrate how reliable performance plus transparent claims consolidate loyalty, encouraging repeat purchases even when prices are higher.

## 6 Conclusion, Implication, And Recommendation

This study advances understanding of Malaysians approach green-cosmetic purchases. Two macro-trends stand out:

### 6.1 Information Accessibility & social media

Consumers are more likely to buy when they can easily verify ingredients, benefits, and authenticity especially via TikTok, brand pages, and retail apps. The implication is clear: brands should invest in clear, credible content, leverage platform-native formats, and use packaging or labels that instantly communicate green credentials.

### 6.2 Promotions & Price Framing

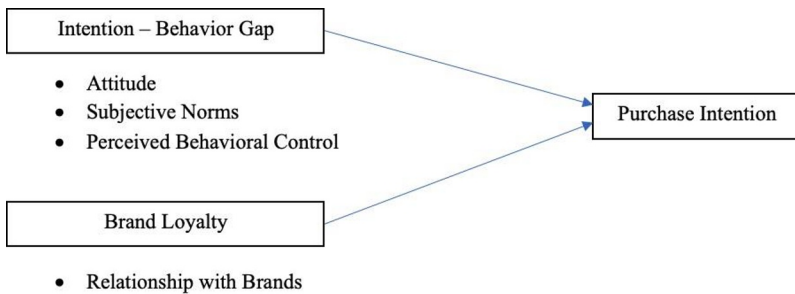
Discounts, vouchers, and time-bound deals materially influence choices and channel preferences (for example: Shopee). Managers should adopt strategic promotional calendars, bundles, and loyalty incentives that align perceived value with the typically higher price points of green products.

Social influence also matters: recommendations and reviews online and offline shape discovery and choice. Encouraging UGC, testimonials, and creator partnerships can strengthen subjective norms that favor greener options.

On the constraints side, verification, price sensitivity, unclear in-store cues, and low awareness remain hurdles. Regulators and brands should collaborate on standardized labeling or certification, improve shelf and app signage, and expand consumer education to reduce confusion and perceived risk.

Most importantly, the study proposes a conceptual view where the intention-behavior gap (structured by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived control) interacts with brand loyalty (Figure 2). To bridge the gap, firms should: build trust through transparent disclosures and credible third-party assurances, offer value through promotions, loyalty programs, and clear “cost-per-use” messaging, improve findability and clarity with consistent green identifiers across shelves and apps and reinforce social proof with authentic reviews and community engagement.

**Figure 2.** Conceptual Framework of Malaysian purchase intention



Limitations include a small, qualitative sample that cannot represent the entire Malaysian market and a focus on green products that may not capture dynamics across the broader beauty category.

Future research should use larger quantitative surveys to validate the model, compare green vs. non-green categories to clarify substitution and complementarity, conduct longitudinal work to track behavior changes over time, explore regional and cultural nuances within Malaysia and integrate industry stakeholder perspectives (brands, retailers, policymakers) for a system-level view.

In sum, the findings offer actionable guidance for marketers and policymakers navigating the shift toward sustainable beauty in Malaysia. By combining robust information strategies, thoughtful pricing, credible verification, and community driven advocacy, the sector can turn favorable intentions into consistent purchasing behavior, and deepen loyalty in the green cosmetics market.

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