

Conceptual Paper: Role of Recycling Socialisation Agents on Recycling Literacy Among Muslim Youth

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of recycling socialisation agents on recycling literacy among Muslim youths. Extant literature review on recycling behaviour delineates the research gap and supports the aim of this study. From consumer behaviour literature, consumer socialisation theory is identified as a complementing theory to support the proposed study. Factors influencing consumer behaviour towards environmental friendly behaviour and a sustainable development identified by previous researchers are internal factors, cultural imperialism, and religion. However, ascertained by review of literature, there is a gap on the role of recycling socialisation agents in fostering recycling literacy. Moreover, the lack of theoretical foundation in previous studies paves the way for incorporating consumer socialisation theory to substantiate this present study specifically in role of parents, peers, mass media, and institutions in cultivating recycling behaviour among Muslim youths. This paper provides a foundation for examining the role of recycling socialisation agents on recycling literacy among Muslim youths. In particular, this study focuses on how recycling socialisation perspective could provide valuable insights on consumer socialisation agent via recycling socialisation agents influence on recycling literacy. This paper provides new insights in understanding critical factors that influence recycling behaviour. Research gaps identified from the extant literature review unearth the role of recycling socialisation agents on recycling literacy as propagated by consumer socialisation theory.

Keywords: Muslim youth, recycling socialisation agent, consumer socialisation theory, recycling literacy, recycling behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Municipal Solid Waste Management (MSWM) is a globally challenging issue especially in developing countries due to its adverse environmental effects (Zamorano et al., (2009), Jalil(2010), Adekunle et al.,(2011)). Most of the researches on environmental responsibility were conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Based on the statistic, Malaysian citizen wasted the source about RM476 million two years ago. One of the biggest wastes is plastics, which contribute 9 percent of the whole waste or RM163 million. The same situation also occurs in Britain where billions of plastics are dumped even though only used once. One piece of plastic takes 5,000 years to decay. This problem indirectly leads to the global warming issue. Packaging technology must therefore balance food protection with other issues including energy

and material costs, heightened social and environmental consciousness, and strict regulations on pollutants and disposal of municipal solid waste (MSW). Consumer behaviour involves the use and disposal of products as well as the study of how these products are purchased. Product use is often of great interest to the marketer because it can influence how a product is best positioned or how consumption can be increased as many environmental problems result from product disposal. Consumer behaviour is almost always performed under the influence of others. Consumer socialisation agents such as parents, peers, mass media, and institutions are external influences that initiate Muslim youths and adolescents into their roles as consumers by helping them acquire what Ward (1974) terms as the skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the market place. Parents, peers, mass media, and institutions together make up the social environment in which Muslim youths learn to become consumer (John, 1999).

Recycling is one of the most important actions currently available to reduce these impacts and represents one of the most dynamic areas in the plastics industry today. Recycling is a process to change waste materials into new products to prevent waste of potentially useful materials, to reduce the consumption of fresh raw materials, to reduce energy usage, to reduce air pollution from incineration and water pollution from land filling by reducing the need for conventional waste disposal, and to lower greenhouse gas emissions as compared to plastic production. Recycling is a key component of modern waste reduction and is the third component of the "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle" waste hierarchy. While plastics have been recycled since the 1970s, the quantities that are recycled vary geographically according to plastic type and application. Recycling of packaging materials has seen rapid expansion over the last decades in a number of countries. Advances in technologies and systems for the collection, sorting, and reprocessing of recyclable plastics have created new opportunities for recycling. With the combined actions of the public, industry, and governments, it may be possible to divert the majority of plastic waste from landfills to recycling over the next decades.

From the previous discourse, it can be noted that the formation of consumer socialisation agents can be instrumental in achieving recycling literacy. Past studies have elaborated on various components of environmental attitude and ecological behaviour and their relationship. Recycling socialisation agents are relevant to study because recycling literacy varies depending on different factors and cultures, level of development of the societies etc. so there are new insights in understanding critical factors influencing recycling behaviour. This paper examines the role of recycling socialisation agents on recycling literacy among Muslim youths. Extant literature review on recycling behaviour delineates the research gap and supports the aim of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Recycling Behaviour

There are many views and studies related to recycling behaviour that aim to understand what people require to participate in recycling. Alfroz et al. (2010) in their study regarding factors that influence the attitudes and behaviours towards recycling among 465 households in Dhaka, Bangladesh found that environmental awareness, storage space, and age (25-35 years old) are the factors that influence the engagement in recycling behaviour. Ehsaneh and Shadi (2013) in their study regarding consumers' attitude towards practising green behaviour (reduce, recycle, and reuse) among 315 university students identified that emotion and cognition are variables that contribute to practising green behaviour. Mashitoh (2007) reports on a survey related to religious factors influencing behaviour in relation to the environment. She found that there are differences of opinion among authors with some stating that religion does not have a significant influence on environmental behaviour while others state that religion has a positive relationship with environmental awareness. This research is useful for practitioners to better understand the conditions and behaviours needed to maximise recycling. However, ascertained by review of literature, there is a gap on the role of recycling socialisation agents in fostering recycling literacy. Moreover, the lack of theoretical foundation in previous studies paves the way for incorporating consumer socialisation theory to substantiate this present study specifically in role of parents, peers, mass media, and institutions in cultivating recycling behaviour among Muslim youths.

2.2 Recycling literacy

Recycle literacy refers to the specific literacy that promotes responsible recycling behaviour. Knowledge and skills on an issue of recycling can help reduce environmental problems. But, knowledge and skills are not enough because they need to be considered when we are making decision and actions, starting at the individual. Construction responsible attitude to the recycling behaviours the main goal of recycling literacy, which refers to knowledge and understanding of issues relating to environmental sustainability and its influence on human lives. One is an environmental literate when he has knowledge and know about the strategies that can be taken, has intrinsic motivation and positive attitude and is responsible in handling environmental issues Wolfe (2002). By improving people's access to health information and their capacity to use it effectively, it is argued that improved health literacy is critical to empowerment. Annamaria and Olivia (2011) in their analysis of personal financial literacy among college students shows that less knowledgeable students tend to hold wrong opinions and make incorrect decisions. It is concluded that college students are not knowledgeable about personal finance. This concept can be used by waste management practitioners to better understand the conditions and behaviours needed to maximise recycling.

2.3 Recycling socialisation

Recycling socialisation is the process by which young adults develop consumer-related skills, knowledge, and attitudes. This field of study has increasingly interested policy makers, marketers, consumer educators, and students of socialisation. Ward et al., (1972) and Kaur et al., (2006) found that mass media, parents, schools, and peers are all agents of consumer socialisation. According to consumer socialisation theory, children and young adults learn the rational aspects of consumption from their parents, while the mass media teach them to give social meaning to products. Other than that, schools or institutions teach the importance of economic wisdom. Finally, peers exercise various social pressures. Research provides some evidence that interaction with one of these socialisation agents affects the way Muslim youths interact with the agents socialisation Gunter and Furnham (1998). Hence, studying the relative influence of consumer socialisation agents is likely to provide a rich understanding on the consumer socialisation agents process. Moschis and Churchill (1978) suggest that a closer look to the relative influence of these agents helps explain the process through which young people develop the ability to evaluate commercial stimuli (e.g., cognitive development versus social learning) which is to influence Muslim youths towards recycling literacy.

2.3.1 Family as a consumer socialisation agent

Family influences both directly and indirectly in consumer socialisation, and parents impact their individual values about consumption in their children in early childhood. Dotson and Hyatt (2000) reveal that parents act as the main socialising agents until the children reach adolescence. Children from single parent would prefer to go to shopping with their parent from whom they would get more chance to acquire knowledge on shopping from their parents compared to children from dual-income families. Mothers act as the main socialising agents in the early stages of children's decision making particularly the negotiation stage. But, their influence declines and becomes equal to other family members in the outcome stage Lee et al., (2002).

2.3.2 Peer group as a consumer socialisation agent

Peer group is defined as a group whose values and attitudes are used by a person as a foundation of his or her present behaviour Hawkins et al., (2006). Peer group influence is defined as the amount to which peers exert influence on the assertiveness, feelings, and behaviour of a person (Bristol et al., 2005). Peers offer a distinctive background within which children develops social skills and cognitive talent MacGuire et al., (1982). Peer influence is more in early adolescence (14 years old), but it progressively decreases as children approach late adolescence Steinberg et al. (1986) as cited by Hawkins et al., (2006). Moreover, peers play a significant role in imparting the knowledge of style, brand, consumption pattern etc. to the children Moschis et al., (1978). Other than that, Childres and Rao (1992) studied the impact of peer group influence on children for some products and found that peer influence

was higher for public products than private products. Peers groups also support children in their purchases or consumption decisions and help them establish a separate identity quite different from their parents Moschics et al., (1984).

2.3.3 Media as a consumer socialisation agent

Media is one of the socialising agents affecting the children throughout their development Moschicset al., (1984). According to Robertson et al., (1974), the impact of advertising on children focuses on three types of effects namely cognitive, affective, and behavioural. Other than that, according to Valkenburget al., (2000) who studied on cognitive effect, children are able to discriminate between a commercial and a television programme, and they are able to comprehend the intent of advertising. Most of these studies used Piaget's model (1965) of cognitive development. Children at Piaget's preoperational stage (2-7 years old) respond to commercials in a different way than do children at concrete operational stage (7-12 years old). Children in the concrete operational stage are mature enough to distinguish between a television commercial and a normal television programme. On affective effects reveal that children's response to commercials gradually decreases as they proceed to concrete operational stage. Most children watch television three to four hours per day. This is the number one after-school activities for six to 17 years olds (Centre for Media Education, 2002). Studies on behaviour effects discuss the extent to which children get persuaded by the commercials and children are making for the purchase of products while shopping with their parents Galst et al., (1976).

2.3.4 Institution as a consumer socialisation agent

Socialisation agents include the institutions and reference groups that influence the adolescents' learning of the consumer role Moschis (1987). In modern societies, institution is the most important agents of socialisation after the family. Reference group influence on consumer behaviour appears to be widespread, particularly for luxury products or products with a great deal of symbolic value Witt and Bruce (1972) and Bearden and Etzel (1982). Young people tend to be more susceptible to reference groups' pressure particularly value-expressive influence Park and Lessig (1977).

CONCLUSION

The findings from the literature review on the importance of parents, peers, mass media, and institutions in building skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to function in market place in young people. These agents have an overwhelming impact on these young people's recycle behaviour. They are not only consumers but have a considerable influence directly or indirectly on family's purchase decisions and recycling literacy. The amount of influence exerted by Muslim youth differs from product group and time of decision making process. Extant literature review on recycling behaviour delineates the research gap and supports the aim of this study. Consumer socialisation theory is identified as a complementing theory to

support the proposed study. Factors influencing consumer behaviour towards environmental friendly and a sustainable development identified by previous researchers are internal factors, cultural imperialism, and religion. This gives an idea to researcher to do research and to look at the issues of recycling. Consumer socialisation agents have relative process with youth to acquire consumer skills, knowledge, and attitudes. This relative impact is not only between one socialisation agent and another, but also between children and adolescents. The purchase behaviour is ruled by the way they have been socialised to act as consumers. The recycling socialisation agents should be developed to influence youths or young people towards recycling. The main components of goods for recycling are to look at product's packaging as a preliminary approach to reduce solid waste in Malaysia. Based on the statistic, Malaysians waste the sources of recycle about RM476 million two years ago. One of the biggest wastes is plastic, which contributes 9 percent of the whole waste or RM163 million. This paper provides new insights in understanding critical factors influencing recycling behaviour. Research gaps identified from the extant literature review unearth the role of recycling socialisation agents on recycling literacy as propagated by consumer socialisation theory.

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