

## ETHICS OF CONSUMPTION (Etika Penggunaan)

<sup>1,2</sup>MASHITOH YAACOB  
<sup>2</sup>ZUBAIDAH MOHD NASIR  
<sup>1</sup>W. SYAIRAH HAZWANI W. PETRA

<sup>1</sup>Pusat Citra Universiti (CITRA UKM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600  
UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Institut Islam Hadhari, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi,  
Selangor, Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

This article is based primarily on quantitative data from an actual study in discussing: (a) the consumption ethics of Muslims in Bandar Baru Bangi (BBB) Malaysia township, i.e., a recently crowned as ‘knowledge city’ and (b) the contextual aspects that encourage or discourage the Muslims to consume ethically. The ethical consumption behavior measured is categorized into two categories: (a) pre-cycling and (b) recycling & reusing, while the contextual aspect measured is categorized into four categories: (a) social; (b) religion; (c) economy and (d) politic. A quantitative methodology, i.e., survey questionnaire, was employed to tap information on the consumption ethics of Muslims in BBB as well as on the influence of the contextual aspects. Hence, the questionnaire was distributed to 563 Muslims in BBB, and 178 of them responded. Reliability and validity tests of 21 items, 5 scales each, were conducted using SPSS Version 19. Cronbach’s Alpha value obtained shows the reliability of the items are high (0.907) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.825. The test of validity shows rotated component matrix in two components which all items loaded above 0.30 and each item loaded with its proposed constructs. Frequency analysis was conducted to identify the frequency of ethical consumption behavior performed by respondents and the influence level

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*Corresponding author: Mashitoh Yaacob, Institut Islam Hadhari, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia, e-mail: mash@ukm.edu.my*

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of contextual aspects on the respondents' ethical consumption behavior. For pre-cycling behavior the majority of respondents (50.6%) performed 'sometimes' and 'rarely' while for the reusing and recycling behavior 46.3% of the respondents performed 'always' and 'most of the time'. Almost 60.0% of the respondents stated that contextual aspects have a 'very strong' and 'strong' influence on their ethical consumption behavior's decision making. Pearson correlation demonstrates that the two categories of ethical consumption behavior have a positive correlation and statistically significant with all four categories of contextual aspects (either  $p < 0.01$  or  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Keywords:** Ethics; consumption; Muslim; Bandar Baru Bangi; Malaysia

### **ABSTRAK**

*Artikel ini adalah berdasarkan kepada data kuantitatif daripada kajian sebenar dalam membincangkan: (a) etika penggunaan umat Islam di Bandar Baru Bangi (BBB) Malaysia yang baru-baru ini dinobatkan sebagai 'bandar ilmu' dan (b) aspek kontekstual yang menggalakkan atau tidak menggalakkan umat Islam untuk menggunakan secara beretika. Tingkah laku etika penggunaan yang diukur, dikategorikan kepada dua kategori: (a) pra-kitar dan (b) kitar semula & guna semula, manakala aspek kontekstual yang diukur dikategorikan kepada empat kategori: (a) sosial; (b) agama; (c) ekonomi dan (d) politik. Kaedah metodologi kuantitatif, iaitu, soal selidik digunakan untuk mendapat maklumat berkaitan etika penggunaan umat Islam di BBB dan juga pengaruh kepada aspek kontekstual. Oleh itu, borang soal selidik diedarkan kepada 563 umat Islam di BBB, dan 178 daripada mereka memberi maklum balas. Ujian kebolehpercayaan dan kesahan daripada 21 item yang setiap satunya mempunyai 5 skala, telah dijalankan menggunakan perisian SPSS versi 19.0. Nilai Alpha Cronbach yang diperoleh menunjukkan kebolehpercayaan item adalah tinggi (0.907) dan Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) yang mengukur kemampuan persampelan adalah 0.825. Ujian kesahan menunjukkan rotated component matriks dalam dua komponen di mana semua item yang dimuatkan melebihi 0.30 dan setiap item berada dalam konstruk yang dicadangkan. Analisis frekuensi dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti kekerapan tingkah laku penggunaan beretika yang dilakukan oleh responden dan tahap pengaruh aspek kontekstual kepada tingkah laku penggunaan beretika responden. Majoriti responden (50.6%) menunjukkan 'kadang-kadang' dan 'jarang' untuk tingkah laku pra-kitar manakala, 46.3% daripada responden menunjukkan 'selalu' dan 'kebanyakan masa' bagi tingkah laku guna semula dan kitar semula. Hampir 60.0% daripada responden menyatakan bahawa aspek kontekstual mempunyai pengaruh yang 'sangat kuat' dan 'kuat' dalam membuat keputusan tingkah laku penggunaan beretika mereka. Korelasi Pearson menunjukkan*

*bahawa kedua-dua kategori tingkah laku penggunaan beretika mempunyai hubungan yang positif dan signifikan secara statistik dengan keempat-empat kategori aspek kontekstual (sama ada  $p < 0.01$  atau  $p < 0.05$ ).*

**Kata kunci:** *Etika; penggunaan; Muslim; Bandar Baru Bangi; Malaysia*

## INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Hulme (2009), our role in the world as moral agents shape our sense of duty and responsibility to care for others and for nature. Western scholars (e.g., Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 1992) described ethical values as an enduring concept of worth formed out of social process of dialogue and debate and influenced by the social, cultural, historical and geographical relationships between society and individual. The scholars further elaborated that ethical values are constructed between individuals and institutions and are informed by ethical and moral judgments and by creating priorities in ideas and belief systems. To the scholars, the ethical values are multiple, often contested and can change over time as people are influenced by others or have new experiences. Hence, to these scholars, ethical values are instable. On the other hand, Muslim scholars (e.g., Baharuddin 1992; Bakar 2007; Mawil 1990; Nasr 1990; Ujang 1993; Yaacob 2009) introduced stable ethical values from Islam (i.e., al-Quran and Sunnah) as the guiding principles in the life of a Muslim, and as the special kind of beliefs that organize other beliefs. These principles extend to the way we interact with the environment. The Prophet SAW once said “When doomsday comes, if someone has a palm shoot in his hand, he should plant it (De Chatel 2003). According to Bakar (2007) and Wersal (1995), human cannot rely on science and technology alone to solve the contemporary environmental and ecological problem. Ethical consumption behavior of Muslims is not only important to secure the future of Islamic world, but also the future of civilization as a whole (Bakar 2007). Bakar (2007) emphasized that:

We are of the opinion that Islamic ideas, ethics, laws, and institutions pertaining to environmental and ecological issues, are yet another legacy of the religion of Islam and its civilization that is very important to be presented to our contemporary world; be it here in Malaysia or elsewhere. We believe traditional Islamic civilization has something precious and timely to offer in effectively dealing with the issue.

Islamic environmental ethics describes that Islam dictates human being to behave ethically in dealing with all creations including other human beings, animals, plants, land, soil, water and air (Yaacob 2009). Islamic environmental ethics explains that all creations are created with two main purposes: (a) for religious function, i.e., as an evidence of Allah’s existence as well as a sign of

His greatness, therefore, the environmental degradation will eliminates the sign of Allah's existence and also restrains other creatures in serving, worshipping and glorifying God, consequently; and (b) for social function, i.e., environmental elements are created to serve human needs with the provision of 'although human being is permitted to consume environmental components but they cannot over exploit the creations to fulfil and satisfy their own desire rather they must consider other creatures and the environmental balance as a whole'. Although all Muslims may support this teaching, there exists a clear gap between the teaching and the translation of the teaching into behavior amongst Muslims. This gap is rarely explicitly and empirically discussed by Muslim scholars. Many Muslim scholars have analyzed Islamic religious scriptures and found that Islam is in support of ethical consumption behavior. However, empirical studies that lead to a tangible way of translating the teaching into behavior are limited. Most of the empirical studies in literature that used religious aspects as their theoretical foundation in relation with environmental behavior were taken up mostly by non-Muslim scholars such as Hand & Van Liere (1984) who used White (1973) thesis, a denominational diversity approach, and a 'no difference' approach (i.e., reflecting the diffusion of the anthropocentric ethos throughout culture away from purely religious institutions). In addition, Fowler (2003) used indigenous religions of Southeast Asian people and Letcher (2003) used Eco-paganism in the United Kingdom. Except for Yaacob (2009), the works of Muslim scholars, such as Mawil (1990), Nasr (1990), Baharuddin (1992), Ujang (1993) and Bakar (2007), are rarely go beyond Islamic scriptures. Hence, research on ethical consumption behavior is timely and relevant in the Muslim world. In addition, research shows that values and beliefs are strong predictors of policy opinion and policy support (Shworm et al. 2010; Milbrath 1984). Clarification and information on the values that people hold for their environmental behavior could provide direction for policy-makers in trying to find solutions to current environmental problems and to advance development in policy and management.

In Malaysia, ethical consumption behavior is one of the neglected facets of a Malaysian Muslim life. We missed it at individual as well as at institutional level - at home, in school, at work, in the Friday's sermons, in a socio-religious gathering, and in the religious-based environmental movements. Hence, a preliminary study was conducted in a Muslim majority township, i.e., Bandar Baru Bangi (BBB) Malaysia (a recently crowned as 'knowledge city'), on their ethical consumption ethics. This paper discusses findings from the actual study on: (a) the consumption ethics of Muslims in BBB Malaysia Township; and (b) the contextual aspects that encourage or discourage the Muslims to consume ethically. The ethical consumption behavior measured is categorized into two categories:

(a) pre-cycling and (b) reuse & recycling, while the contextual aspect measured is categorized into four categories: (a) social; (b) religion (Islam); (c) economy and (d) politic.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Quantitative approach with a cross-sectional study as a research design was adopted in this study as data were collected only at one point of time for the same respondents, and a quantitative survey questionnaire was employed to tap information on the consumption ethics of Muslims in Bandar Baru Bangi (BBB) as well as on the influence of the contextual aspects. Hence, a set of questionnaire was distributed to 563 Muslims from various demographic characteristics in BBB, and 178 of them responded. Of the respondents, 2.4% were below 20s, 73.7% were between 21-40 years old, and 24.0% were 41 years old and above. Many of the respondents were males (58.1%), and more than half of the respondents (52.1%) were single. Overall, the sample was well educated: 74.7% had tertiary education, 15.1% had high school certificates, 9.6% had secondary education, and only 0.6% had a primary education. Of the respondents, 57.0% were blue collar workers earning monthly RM3,000 and less; 26.9% were white collar workers earning monthly more than RM3,000 while the remaining 16.1% were not employed. In addition, 48.8% of the respondents had 1-3 household members, 39.3 had a total of 4 to 6 household members, 10.7% had 7 to 9 household members, and another 1.2% had 10-12 household members. Fifty point five percent owned the house that they live in, 10.7% owned the house but were still paying off a mortgage, 34.3% rented from a private landlord, and 4.5% rented from a public housing authority. Bungalow (single unit house) dwellers consisted of 15.2% of the respondents, 6.7% were in semi-detached houses, 51.7% were in terrace houses, 13.0% in apartment blocks and 13.4% lived in flats.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections, i.e., Section A: Pre-cycling; Section B: Reuse and Recycling; and Section C: Demographic Information. The survey instrument was based largely on variables found important in the literature on the issues of ethical consumption behavior. Five-likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree was used in this study.

Reliability test was conducted to check on the reliability level of questionnaire items while validity test was conducted to check on whether or not items loaded above 0.30 and whether or not each item loaded with its proposed constructs.

Frequency analysis was conducted to identify the frequency of ethical consumption behavior performed by respondents and the influence level of contextual aspects on the respondents' ethical consumption behavior. Additionally, Pearson Correlation

was utilized to measure the significance, direction (positive or negative), and strength of the relationship between the contextual aspects and ethical consumption behavior of the respondents.

## RESULTS

Reliability and validity tests of 21 items, 5 scales each, were conducted using SPSS Version 19. Cronbach’s Alpha value obtained shows the reliability of the items are high (0.907). Alpha value more than 0.7 indicates that items for ethical consumption behavior and contextual aspects constructs used in the research instrument, i.e., the questionnaire, have a high consistency and stability (Table 1). Meanwhile, the test of validity shows rotated component matrix in two components which all items loaded above 0.30 and each item loaded with its proposed constructs. *Eigenvalue* for ethical consumption behavior and contextual aspects constructs is more than 1.0 and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is also high at 0.825 indicates that items used in the research instrument are appropriate to measure the constructs under study (Table 2).

TABLE 1 Results of Reliability Analysis

Scales	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach Alpha Value
				.907
Ethical Consumption Behavior				
Pre-cycling	10	2.7753	.59665	.915
Reuse and Recycling	11	2.7697	.68707	.909
Contextual Aspects (pre-cycling):				
Social	10	2.6854	.92175	.895
Religion (Islam)	10	2.3483	1.00396	.895
Economy	10	3.0056	.81993	.898
Politics	10	2.2360	1.01983	.894
Contextual Aspects (reuse & recycling):				
Social	11	2.8483	.98263	.892
Religion (Islam)	11	2.2921	1.06514	.895
Economy	11	2.7640	.94507	.892
Politic	11	2.1404	1.07222	.892

TABLE 2 Results of Validity Analysis

Variables	Construct 1	Construct 2	
Ethical Consumption Behavior:			
Pre-cycling	-.015	.818	
Reuse & Recycling	.190	.770	
Contextual Aspects:			
Social:			
Pre-cycling	.661	.446	
Reuse & Recycling	.662	.530	
Religion (Islam):			
Pre-cycling	.834	.089	
Reuse & Recycling	.830	.108	
Economy:			
Pre-cycling	.578	.511	
Reuse & Recycling	.739	.380	
Politic:			
Pre-cycling	.831	.115	
Reuse & Recycling	.875	.079	
Construct	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	% Variance	% Cumulative
Contextual Aspects	5.492	54.916	54.916
Ethical Consumption Behavior	1.328	13.277	68.193
KMO			.825

### The Ethical Consumption Behavior of Muslims

For pre-cycling behavior, the majority of respondents (50.6%) performed pre-cycling activities 'sometimes and rarely', 42.5% of the respondents 'always and most of the time' performed pre-cycling activities while only 6.9% 'never' performed pre-cycling activities. Amongst pre-cycling activities that are 'always and most of the time' performed by the majority respondents are 'minimizing waste by using every bit of the food that they prepare for their family and throwing away as little as possible' (80.4%) and 'buying a bulky pack rather than a small pack for products that their households consume in quantity' (73.6%). Another 68.0% were 'sometimes and rarely' 'buying canned drinks or glass bottled drinks, rather than plastic bottled drinks' and 'buying a handkerchief rather than tissues, or washable nappies rather than disposable nappies'. However, the pre-cycling activity 'using their own bag when going shopping, rather than one provided by the shop' recorded a highest percentage of 'never' performed the activity amongst

the respondents (24.2%) while the activity ‘buying a handkerchief rather than tissues, or washable nappies rather than disposable nappies’ recorded 14.6% of the respondents ‘never’ performed the activity.

TABLE 3 Results of the Pre-cycling Activities

Variables	Always & Most of the Time (%)	Sometimes & Rarely (%)	Never (%)
1. Shop at a flea market, or a second hand shop for your household.	27.5	66.3	6.2
2. Buy refillable items for your household such as ink pens, perfume, or dishwasher liquid.	58.9	35.4	5.7
3. Buy fruit and vegetables loose, not packaged, or with as little packaging as possible.	43.3	51.7	5.0
4. Use your own bag when going shopping, rather than one provided by the shop.	20.3	55.5	24.2
5. Buy products because either the products or their packaging can be used again rather than those that can only be used once.	37.1	59.0	3.9
6. Buy products with the phrase ‘environmentally friendly’ on the label.	36.6	57.3	6.1
7. Buy canned drinks or glass bottled drinks, rather than plastic bottled drinks.	30.3	68.0	1.7
8. Buy a bulky pack rather than a small pack for products that your household consumes in quantity.	73.6	25.8	0.6
9. Minimize waste by using every bit of the food that you prepare for your family and throwing away as little as possible.	80.4	18.5	1.1
10. Buy a handkerchief rather than tissues, or washable nappies rather than disposable nappies.	17.4	68.0	14.6
Total Average (%)	42.5	50.6	6.9

For the reuse and recycling behavior, 46.3% of the respondents performed reuse and recycling activities ‘always and most of the time’, 42.5% of the respondents ‘sometimes and rarely’ performed the activities and another 11.3% of the respondents ‘never’ performed reuse and recycling activities. The majority of the respondents



(75.3%) were ‘always and most of the time’ performed the activity ‘re-use plastic items such as bottles, bags, containers and so forth’, but they were ‘sometime and rarely’ performed the activities ‘recycle food cans, drinks cans, or foil’ (59.5%), ‘sort out their household waste according to whether or not it is recyclable’ (57.9%) and ‘take old recyclable items to a recycling center’ (57.3%). Meanwhile, the top reuse and recycling activity ‘never’ performed by the majority of the respondents (44.9%) was ‘compost their household organic waste’. The only reuse and recycling activity performed by every respondent, whether ‘always and most of the time’ (75.3%) or ‘sometimes and rarely’ (24.7%), was ‘re-use plastic items such as bottles, bags, containers and so forth’.

TABLE 4 Results of the Reuse and Recycling Activities

Variables	Always & Most of the Time (%)	Sometimes & Rarely (%)	Never (%)
1. Try to get something repaired rather than buying a new one.	66.3	33.2	0.5
2. Take old recyclable items to a recycling centre.	25.8	57.3	16.9
3. Sort out your household waste according to whether or not it is recyclable.	32.0	57.9	10.1
4. Re-use paper, cardboard, junk mail, magazines, or newspapers for other purposes such as wrappers, artwork, or to light the fire.	67.5	30.3	2.2
5. Feed animals such as your pets, livestock, wild birds, stray cats and so forth with your household organic waste.	62.9	28.7	8.4
6. Compost your household organic waste.	6.8	48.3	44.9
7. Freeze food leftovers for another meal, or unexpected guests.	42.1	50.0	7.9
8. Re-use plastic items such as bottles, bags, containers and so forth.	75.3	24.7	0.0
9. Recycle food cans, drinks cans, or foil.	25.8	59.5	14.7
10. Re-use textiles such as old baby clothes for a new baby.	44.4	43.4	12.4
11. Recycle or re-use glass bottles and jars.	60.1	33.7	6.2
Total Average (%)	46.3	42.5	11.3

### **The Influence of Contextual Aspects on the Ethical Consumption Behavior of Muslims**

Almost 60.0% of the respondents stated that contextual aspects have a ‘very strong’ and ‘strong’ influence on their ethical consumption behavior’s decision making, i.e., for pre-cycling and reuse and recycling behaviors.

Majority of respondents (82.6%) reported that economy had a ‘very strong and strong’ influence on their decisions to perform pre-cycling activities followed by social aspect (64.0%), and 49.4% of the respondents reported that politic had ‘some and little’ influence on their decision to perform pre-cycling activities. Hence, economic and social aspects were the biggest influence (either ‘very strong and strong’ influence or ‘some and little’ influence), respectively, on the majority of respondents’ decision to perform pre-cycling activities. Additionally, only 1.1% respondents reported that economic and social aspects had ‘no influence’ on their decision to perform pre-cycling activities (Table 5).

TABLE 5 The Influence Level of Contextual Aspects on Pre-cycling Activities

Variables	Very Strong & Strong Influence (%)	Some & Little Influence (%)	No Influence (%)
Social	64.0	34.9	1.1
Religion (Islam)	51.7	44.4	3.9
Economy	82.6	16.3	1.1
Politic	46.1	49.4	4.5
Total Average (%)	61.1	36.3	2.7

For reuse and recycling activities, the majority of the respondents (71.3%) reported that social aspect had ‘very strong and strong’ influence on their decision to reuse and recycling. Economic aspect was also reported by many respondents (69.1%) to have influenced immensely on their decision to reuse and recycling. Meanwhile, political aspect was reported by many respondents (52.8%) to have ‘some and little’ influence on their decision to reuse and recycling. Again, social and economic aspects were the most influential on the decision of respondents on whether or not to reuse and recycling. Additionally, only 2.3% of the respondents reported that they were not influenced by both social and economic aspects (Table 6).

TABLE 6 The Influence Level of Contextual Aspects on Reuse and Recycling Activities

Variables	Very Strong & Strong Influence (%)	Some & Little Influence (%)	No Influence (%)
Social	71.3	26.4	2.3
Religion (Islam)	48.9	44.9	6.2
Economy	69.1	28.6	2.3
Politic	39.9	52.8	7.3
Total Average (%)	57.3	38.2	4.5

Pearson correlation demonstrates that the two categories of ethical consumption behavior have a positive correlation and statistically significant with all four categories of contextual aspects (either  $p < 0.01$  or  $p < 0.05$ ).

Results of Pearson correlation analysis illustrate that pre-cycling activities had a positive and significant relationship with all four contextual aspects (i.e., social, economy, and politic at  $p < 0.01$ ; and religion (Islam) at  $p < 0.05$ ). However, the correlation for economic aspect was weak ( $r = 0.33$ ), and correlations for social, religious (Islam), and political aspects were very weak, i.e.,  $r = 0.28$ ;  $r = 0.18$ ; and  $r = 0.20$ , respectively.

TABLE 7 Pearson Correlation between Contextual Aspects and Pre-cycling Activities

		Pre-cycling
Social	Pearson Correlation	.282**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Religion (Islam)	Pearson Correlation	.179*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017
Economy	Pearson Correlation	.326**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Politic	Pearson Correlation	.199**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008

\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed)

Pearson correlation analysis conducted between reuse and recycling behavior and the contextual aspects resulted in a positive and significant relationship with all four contextual aspects at  $p < 0.01$ . The correlation with the social aspect was modest, i.e.,  $r = 0.51$  while for the religious and economic aspects the correlations were weak with  $r = 0.32$  and  $r = 0.40$ , respectively. For the political aspect, the correlation was very weak with  $r = 0.29$ .

TABLE 8 Pearson Correlation between Contextual Aspects and Reuse & Recycling Activities

		Reuse & Recycling
Social	Pearson Correlation	.509**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Religion (Islam)	Pearson Correlation	.324**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Economy	Pearson Correlation	.403**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Politic	Pearson Correlation	.290**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed)

Thus, the findings illustrate that: (a) For pre-cycling behavior the majority of respondents (50.6%) performed ‘sometimes’ and ‘rarely’ while for the reusing and recycling behavior 46.3% of the respondents performed ‘always’ and ‘most of the time’; and (b) Almost 60.0% of the respondents stated that contextual aspects have a ‘very strong’ and ‘strong’ influence on their ethical consumption behavior’s decision making. Pearson correlation demonstrates that the two categories of ethical consumption behavior have a positive correlation and statistically significant with all four categories of contextual aspects (either  $p < 0.01$  or  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, it can be said that all four categories of contextual aspects, i.e., social, religion, economy, and politic influenced the decisions made by the respondents on whether or not to perform and practice ethical consumption behavior such as pre-cycling, reuse and recycling activities in their daily life.

## DISCUSSIONS

The present study (based on the survey data) found that, among the contextual aspects, elements of the economic aspect such as price of consumer products, subsidies,

taxes etc., were related statistically significantly to ethical consumption behavior the strongest. The relationship was positive, meaning that the more the participants were influenced by the economic aspect to behave in an environmentally ethical way, the more they were likely to perform ethical consumption behavior. This finding supports the finding by Yaacob (2009) in that the economic aspect strongly influenced the ethical consumption behavior of respondents compared to the other contextual aspects. In other words, economic decision making dominates. The finding of the present study also agrees with the findings of previous studies. Many authors (Ebreo et al. 1999; Hess 1998; Mainieri et al. 1997; Moncrief 1973; Oskamp et al. 1991; Schwepker & Cornwell 1991; Shrum et al. 1994; Shrum et al. 1995; Thogersen 2000; Wilber 1998) have agreed that the economic aspect is a strong influence on environmental behavior. The most likely reason for the economic aspect being a positive influence on environmental behavior, according to Mainieri et al. (1997), is that an increase in the prices of products encouraged consumers to reduce wasteful practices.

Additionally, Yaacob (2009) found that the higher the price of consumer products in the market the more environmentally ethical behavior is performed by respondents. Yaacob (2009) further explained that the economic aspect would likely to influence environmentally ethical behavior more if the respondents were economic migrants who came to a certain location to start a new life, they did not have much, financially, to start with. For this reason, more often than other reasons, they had to perform ethical consumption behavior to simply economically survive in that new location, more so if the cost of living was amongst their prior concerns as in the case of Bandar Baru Bangi (BBB). In addition, their belief that wasteful behavior is sinful, along with the vendors green policy (such as supermarkets around BBB), have also pushed them to adopt ethical consumption behavior.

Besides the substantial influence of the economic aspect on respondents' ethical consumption behavior, the survey found that the social aspect was also significant in its relation to ethical consumption behavior. Although the social aspect was tested along with the economic aspect which respondents regarded as much more important for their pre-cycling behavior but the social aspect was a stronger influence on the respondents' reuse and recycling behavior compared to the influence of the economic aspect. The finding of the present study support the claim by Oskamp et al. (1991) that contextual aspects, i.e., social extrinsic influences, as used in this study are the most useful predictors of environmental behavior though not as strong as social intrinsic influences on environmental behavior according to Ebreo et al. (1999), Mainieri et al. (1997) and Shrum et al. (1994). The respondents were equally influenced by various elements of the social aspect - family members like their children and their wives, wider community members like their neighbors and friends, and mass media like television and newspapers.

The reason for the respondents to be influenced by their children and their wives could be because Islam teaches that every member of a family has a role towards each other, and they must consult each other for a better decision in their daily routines including in performing ethical consumption behavior. Islam emphasizes that raising children as good practicing Muslims is among the priorities of the Muslim community members. Muslims believe that strong Islamic and cultural values inculcated since childhood and through traditional family values are important to assure them to be good Muslims including towards the environment. A head of a family felt necessary to educate and train family members to follow a healthy way of life - spiritually, morally and physically. Those who were influenced by their neighbors and friends could be because they shared the ethical consumption values of the wider Malaysian communities. They found that ethical consumption behavior is parallel to Islamic values, and al-Quran encourages them to learn what is good from other people including from those who are not in the same faith as theirs. The probable reason for the participants to be influenced by the media could be because Malaysian mass media paid a lot of attention to environmental journalism by constantly airing environmental programs on their television channels and publishing comments on various environmental issues in their newspapers.

On the other hand, the results of the present study's quantitative survey illustrate that, compared to the economic and the social influences, the religious and the political aspects were the weakest in influencing ethical consumption behavior of the Muslim respondents although both aspects were related statistically significantly to the Muslim respondents' ethical consumption behaviors.

The religious aspect, as mentioned above, relates significantly with ethical consumption behavior although not as strong as the economic and the social aspects. Many studies have found that general environmental concerns do not correlate highly with specific environmental behavior (Huebner & Lipsey 1981; Mainieri et al. 1997; Oom Do Valle et al. 2005; Shrum et al. 1994; Thogersen 2000; Wall 1995). Therefore, since religions are seen as providing general reasons for being concerned about the environment, rather than specific motives for ethical consumption behavior, the weak religious influence on ethical consumption behavior, probably reflects the fact that a general attitude cannot usually be used to predict a specific behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980). Another possible explanation of the quantitative survey results, in that the participants reported that the religious aspect was not a strong influence, is that the questionnaire asked only about the influence of religious figures - imam, *ustaz* and their religious teachings. Yaacob (2009) found that the results of the qualitative interviews indicate that the participants did not find such religious figures explicitly teaching the relation between their religion and the environment

let alone the relation between their religion and ethical consumption behavior such as pre-cycling, recycling and reusing. Yaacob (2009) also found that one of the religious figures, asked via email questionnaire, also admitted that although “Islam has provided the basis for ethical treatment of the environment by making man the caretaker of the resources and prohibiting wasteful use of these resources”, the efforts by religious figures in raising awareness on the issue among the Muslims was lacking. Hence, had the Quran and Sunnah been put in the questionnaire as additional elaboration in the category of religious aspect the quantitative survey results might have been different as we would have the opportunity to see their expression of personal understandings of Islamic teachings of the Quran and Sunnah that cover the protection of the environment and showed their ability to relate the teachings to their ethical consumption behavior.

However, another reason for the reported lack of religious influence by the respondents is generally Muslims are taking for granted their religion as central to their way of life. They are constantly reminded by the Quran (words of Allah) regarding (1) the concept of *tawhid* that every aspect in life is integrated, and (2) the basic ethical values like justice, honesty, helping the weak etc. to be applied in their daily routine. Thus, religious influence, to them, is almost in no need of mention as far as their ethical consumption behavior and their daily actions to and interactions with the other environmental elements around them are concerned. This probably explained why religious influence was not their response to the question of what made them perform ethical consumption behavior. To them, their economic reasons for performing ethical consumption behavior, for instance, are part and parcel of their religious duties - economic issues are a concern not in contrast to but as part of their religious worldview. In other words, to them, social, economic and political influences are not separate from their religious influence; rather, their religion governs the influences on their ethical consumption behavior.

Similar to the religious aspect, the results of the survey data showed that the political aspect was statistically significantly related to ethical consumption behavior of the respondents but its influence on the ethical consumption behavior of the respondents was very weak. This was probably because the economic and social aspects were so much more important than the other contextual aspects. In the absence of the economic and social aspects, or if the contextual aspects were tested separately, the political aspect may be a significant influence (Thogersen 2000). Future research could test this. Furthermore, political aspects such as funding and regulations were probably not being implemented consistently enough and politicians and political parties were not strongly influencing ethical consumption behavior (Dunlap 1991; Van Liere & Dunlap 1980).

Additionally, the political aspect was not reported to be very influential probably due to the fact that, in Malaysia, ethical consumption behavior such as pre-cycling, reuse and recycling are encouraged but not required due to the location and type of refuse disposal facilities not always being practical. Furthermore, the reported lack of political influence probably due to the lack of enforcement as many regional or district councils in Malaysia do not implement the policies related to ethical consumption behavior, i.e., pre-cycling, reuse and recycling behaviors, satisfactorily. The little influence that the political aspect had on ethical consumption behavior of the respondents centered on the role of Malaysian local governments in managing household solid waste - the implementation of systematic collection of disposals to bring environmental awareness into the household around Malaysia, and also some influence from Greenpeace which is not a local non-governmental organization (NGO) probably because publicity in the media was much better about such an international NGO compared to the local environmental NGOs. Policies, laws and regulations had a limited influence on ethical consumption behavior probably because they were too complicated for the respondents to relate to their ethical consumption behavior. In addition, respondents had little influence from political parties and politicians, i.e., almost none of the political parties in Malaysia championing issues on the environment let alone issues on ethical consumption behavior.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study provides empirical information that economic solutions to the economic causes of environmental degradation lie with community members, such as Muslims in Malaysia, who are all consumers. In addition, unlike the previous studies that tested the influence of the social aspect, the religious aspect, the economic aspect, and the political aspect separately this study tested the contextual aspects together. Thus, this study was able to answer the question on which of those contextual aspects was the most significant when they were compared with each other. This present study illustrates that a majority of ethical consumption behaviors were performed by the majority of respondents at least at the rate of 'sometimes and rarely', and their ethical consumption behaviors were reported to be influenced by mostly economic and social aspects compared to religious and political aspects. These findings could be utilized by relevant parties such as religious figures, religious institutions, political parties, and politicians to devise a mechanism in mobilizing the community, the Muslim community in particular, to perform ethical consumption behaviors.



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