

THE DETERMINANT FACTORS TOWARDS ECOPRENEURIAL INTENTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

In supporting the global response to Covid-19, research on entrepreneurial activities is becoming a topic of interest. The need to survive and sustain the economy is seriously viewed and discussed across the nation. Recent statistics at indexation of business journal shows approximately 653,000 studies tested the implication of business activities from the impact of Covid-19. While considering the major impact to the economy factors, agricultural activities is now becoming prominent for income generation in Malaysia. This study delved into ecopreneurial intention among Malaysian potential entrepreneur. A set of questionnaire with 43 related questions were successfully distributed and collected to 119 respondents across the nations. Results were analyzed through path analysis using AMOS version 23 to interpret the collected data from a population set. Imperative issues were highlighted and recommendations were made for further investigations.

Keywords: Ecopreneurial Intention, Ecopreneur, Sustainability, Covid-19, Entrepreneur, Awareness, Attitude, Economy.

INTRODUCTION

The crisis of Covid-19 pandemic has given a mass impact to nation's economy across the globe. The massive loss of business activities and dealings is alarming and disturbing. Major re-shifting force of social and economic act is revising to suits with the new phenomena. This includes altered workforce, metamorphosis of demand, supply chain disruptions, and subsequent changes of business models (Seetharaman, 2020) is the new normal practices by every sectors and industries (Kirkwood & Walton, 2010).

While the nation struggles to survive, research to uphold the minimum of living is massively framed and conducted. This is proven when approximately 653,000 topics on Covid-19 published in the indexed journal of which most of it proposed fervent process of prevention and cure in the immediate future and recovery in the long term (Seetharaman, 2020). In line with the awareness to embark into the new norms, most of the business personal now focuses into business opportunities that elucidate the environmental problems. This includes tendering into sustainable business operations (Carter et al., 2007).

The involvement of creating and selling environmental-friendly products and services is view as serious spectacle in many countries (Seetharaman, 2020). It has been reported that the awareness arouse when the pandemic decease hits the world. Alike every other country across

the globe, the practices in Malaysia is now a predominant trend. In line with the government aspiration towards sustainable development, most of the business model now focuses on ecological concepts. This includes emphasizing on the environmental problems (Pastakia, 2022).

Intuitively, the practices will not only impact the citizens to survive but rather many opportunists see it as a new involvement for alternative paths. While the Covid-19 crisis imposed enormous challenges on daily live, on the other context it initiates new innovations for commercialization, introducing new prospect of business models.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Green Business Practices (GBPs)

The concern on promoting clean and safe environment is relatively significant to most of the micro environmental activity today. This includes enforcing green management concepts to every business across the sectors. The enforcement has given additional opportunity range to entrepreneur in promoting new business models and ideas (Shook & Bratianu, 2010).

Challenges posed by the pandemic are an eye opener to businesses to seize new opportunities emerging in the recovery. This proven when many countries conducted after action review to collect data and insights on lessons learned from the pandemic (Anker, 2021). The dramatically changed to new norms explode growth to business areas necessary to fit the supply and demand. According to Amankwah Amoah (2020), reflection on Europe countries with regard to the pandemic situation caused deep changes to the business ecosystem. As a result, the awareness that entails on the need to focus on green business practices (GBPs) and environmental sustainability magnetize significant opportunity (Durugbo & Amankwah-Amoah, 2019).

Challenges in sustaining environment momentum during the pandemic crisis are demanding. Views in protecting green management and business practice is highly prioritize and imperatively important to many countries. Activities that cause environmental violation which reduce the biodiversity will be accused and take action through legal and regulatory penalties.

To overcome the problems, green economy concepts and procedures are highly encouraged recently in Malaysia to create awareness in protecting the environment. In this respect, new opportunities are introduced with regard to green business management to entrepreneurs in responding the authorities concern (Uslu et al., 2015)

Attitude

The hit of Covid-19 has affected most of the agrifood business ecosystem. This includes interruption on the worldwide supply chain management. In less developed countries, the lockdown orders imposed by the authorities disrupted the links that connected between rural and urban areas. The interruption caused major implication on food supply especially to the city areas and caused harm to the society (Nicola et al., 2020). Due to the scarcity in getting the agrifood supplies from abroad, opportunity in promoting productive gardening is actively perform by local entrepreneur (McEwen, 2013).

In Malaysia, agriculture activities is now seriously viewed and encourage. The government allocated RM10 million budgets for the purpose and has announced it under the 12th Malaysia Plan (Minister 2021). The reason is to boost the consumption of food safety besides helping out the nation especially that affected with the pandemic Covid-19 to generate new

additional income. Among the initiative taken is empowering new technology by incorporating youth involvement. Reason being, these groups are proven to be IT savvy and thus able to integrate with both soft and hard technology skills (Nadarajah, 2020).

To fortify the intention in involving with ecopreneurial business activities, it is noted that skill is a principle element. However, attitude triggers a significant component to be resilient and patient in managing the task. As a matter of fact, this study claims that attitude is a significant factor to involve with the ecopreneur business field (Masjud, 2020).

Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: Attitude has a positive effect on economy to determine the ecopreneur intention in Malaysia.

H₂: Attitude has a positive effect on the determinant factor towards ecopreneurial intention in Malaysia.

AWARENESS

Since Covid-19 hits the world, many businesses are looking for another opportunity to survive. Business models are review and change to suits the situations. In line with the phenomena, the involvement towards ecopreneurship is one of the most encouraging business ideas. Studies show that the activities does not only aspires new improvement through innovating clean environment but rather it encourage the concept of sustainability (Kirkwood & Walton, 2010).

In promoting ecopreneurship and sustainable development, the urgency in compiling reliable knowledge towards green economy platform is vital (Kardos et al., 2019). This includes creating awareness through shifting customers' attitude by providing relevant information which thus helps them to preserve knowledge and behavior (Anor Salim et al., 2019).

Awareness for emerging into sustainable activity involves commitment from the local industry, community and authorities. In Malaysia, the practice is highly encouraged and observes thoroughly. Few campaigns and movement are taken place to educate the nations. Besides keeping the environment clean, the objective is to encourage them to involve with business that relates with ecology ecosystem. To expose better understanding on green economy platform amongst ecopreneurs is through organizing awareness activities. Hence, this study claims that manifesting the awareness factors is significant in involving with ecopreneurial activities in Malaysia (Roxas, 2014).

Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₃: Awareness has a positive effect on economy to determine the ecopreneur intention in Malaysia.

H₄: Awareness has a positive effect on the determinant factor towards ecopreneurial intention in Malaysia.

ECONOMY

The infection of recent pandemic Covid-19 does not only affected major crises to the public health but rather it leaves remarkable implication to the global economy. Productivity reduction, business closure, trade disruption and destruction of tourism industry are amongst the consequences that affected all countries across the globe. Although there are ample research conducted on the expected economic recovery, but most of the people still struggle to survive

(Anker, 2021; Seetharaman, 2020; Açikgöz & Günay, 2020). In Malaysia, the crises continuously disrupt the market which cause unemployment rate to rise, owing to poor economic performance (Hasanat et al., 2020).

Giving a major implication towards the nation's income, people nowadays are looking forward for another opportunity to survive. The hit of Covid-19 affected almost every business sectors and fields. This includes disruption in the supply chain management when the movement restriction order imposed by the authority. As a consequence, the demand for local fresh food is now rising. Looking from the other perspective, activities that involved with agriculture is viewed as one of the good opportunity for Local entrepreneur (Lal, 2020).

According to Nicola et al. (2020), the supply for local agrifood business increasing since the restriction on long distance distribution chains. As a result, the perspective changed people's ideology in involving with agricultural business (Salim et al., 2018).

The understanding in sustaining green environment has given broad impact to nature ecosystem. As such, new norms enforced different views in business model opportunity. With this note, the study claims that the economy is significant in moderating between the awareness and attitude with ecopreneurial intention in Malaysia.

Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₅: Economy moderates awareness and attitude towards Ecopreneurial Intention in Malaysia.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research objectives of the study are to investigate factors that trigger potential business to involve in the ecopreneurial activity. This would allow for more systematic arrangement in setting the strategy. Appropriate program can be undertaken to remedy the gap vis-a-vis economy to determine ecopreneur intention.

Research Design

The study intends to establish a better understanding on the intention for the local citizen in Malaysia to involve in ecopreneurial activities. Motivational factors and skills that lead to the intention are screening to assist in finding research objective. Given the need to explore these phenomena, while effectively integrated with the local work ethos, this study adopted a quantitative approach for data collection and analysis whereby questionnaires were distributed to local Malaysian entrepreneurs for data compilation (Putra et al., 2021).

For data collection, the study conducted self-administered questionnaire from the sample of local Malaysian entrepreneurs from numerous backgrounds. The survey instrument incorporates with 5-point Likert scale with open-ended questions to retrieve the respondents' demographic information. Approximately 119 completed questionnaires were collected from the respondents across business background and experiences.

All questionnaire items are grouped into 4 factors, namely awareness, attitude, economy and ecopreneurial intention respectively. Each item is tested using reliability test to analyse the internal consistency. The study intends to test the relationship between independent variable (awareness and attitude) and the dependent variable (ecopreneurial intention) by taking into consideration on the effect of moderator (economy). In testing the hypothesis, the study adopted both IBM SPSS Statistics and AMOS Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to clarify the nature of the relationship between the variables.

Development of Instrument and Data collection

Better understanding on the involvement of practicing an environmentally-friendly products and services amongst potential entrepreneurs in Malaysia is the aim of this study. Given the need to explore the fundamental factors by taking into consideration on the macro-environmental credential, this study adopted a quantitative approach. All details and information were collected from sets of questionnaire distributed to local ecopreneurs and potential local ecopreneurs regardless of their age and business background.

Self-administrated questionnaire was used as a method in collecting data from the sample of ecopreneurs and potential ecopreneurs in Malaysia. The survey instrument comprised of 48 questions which requires responded to provide their demographic information, rating scale items (5-point Likert scale) with one open-ended question. Approximately, 200 questionnaires were administered and distributed to relevant respondents. However only 119 (59.5%) were successfully collected and analysed.

To begin with the analysis, the study runs reliability test to 4 main variables, namely awareness, attitude, economy and ecopreneurial intention. The test scores for these 4 factors are high with Cronbach alpha value 0.727 (awareness), 0.868 (attitude), (0.737) economy and .891 (ecopreneurial intention). The details are explicit at Table 1.

Independent Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Awareness	0.727	0.724	5
Attitude	0.868	0.867	5
Economy	0.737	0.749	5
Ecopreneurial activities	0.891	0.893	8

FINDINGS

The findings from the study are divided into four:

1. Descriptive statistics of demographic information;
2. Predictors of Attitude;
3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA); and
4. Moderation factors in ecopreneur intention.

Descriptive statistics of demographic information

The instrument of distributed questionnaire contained 4 sections: (1) Part A: Comprehensive demographic information; (2) Awareness; (3) Attitude; (4) Economy; and (5) Ecopreneurial Intention. All scenarios are using a five-point Likert scale. The representative list was traced based on the comparison made on the demographic characteristics with those of the general business population.

The questionnaire was distributed to a group of local entrepreneurs across Malaysia with different demographics that are interested to involve in the ecopreneurial activities. A total of 200 questionnaires were successfully sent, of which 119 completed yielding 59.51% response rate.

The sample of this study were from both gender with slightly high percentage on female compared to male (64.7%; 77/119), with a majority of age between the range of 31-40 (37%; 44/119). The place of origin was reported mostly on urban compared to rural area (75.6%; 90/119). Table 2-4 below depict the differences in demographic factors from gender, age and place of origin respectively.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	42	35.3	35.3	35.3
	Female	77	64.7	64.7	100.0
	Total	119	100.0	100.0	

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25 and below	33	27.7	27.7	27.7
	26-30	13	10.9	10.9	38.7
	31-40	44	37.0	37.0	75.6
	41-50	25	21.0	21.0	96.6
	51-60	4	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	119	100.0	100.0	

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rural	29	24.4	24.4	24.4
	Urban	90	75.6	75.6	100.0
	Total	119	100.0	100.0	

The finding reflects recent Malaysian trends were more favorable involving into ecopreneurial activities fall into Malay race that reflects 86.6% (103/119) of the total respondents. The second largest groups of respondents in the study are from Indian race with 9.2% (11/119) while others races and Chinese are of 3.4% (4/119) and .8% (1/119) respectively. From experience wise viewpoints, it was reported that most of the respondents are not exposed to the business involvement yielding a total of 59.7% (71/119) compared to 40.3% (48/119) with those who have business experiences. The details are explained in Tables 5 & 6 below.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	48	40.3	40.3	40.3
	No	71	59.7	59.7	100.0
	Total	119	100.0	100.0	

From the of perspective of educational level, it was found that almost 40.3% (48/121) of the respondents with postgraduate qualification followed by bachelor's degree with a total of

37.8% (45/119). Subsequently, approximately 14.4% (16/119) and .8% (1/119) of the respondents gained a qualification from secondary and professional levels respectively. Table 7 shows the frequency details of the respondent's educational level.

		Frequency	Percent Per		Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Secondary or high school	16	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4
	Undergraduate degree	45	37.8		37.8	51.3
	Postgraduate	48	40.3		40.3	91.6
	Professional	9	7.6		7.6	99.2
	Others	1	.8		0.8	100.0
	Total	119	100.0		100.0	

Predictors of Attitude

To ascertain the predictor, ecopreneur is used as a dependent variable while attitude, awareness and economy are used as independent variable. Table 7 shows the results of stepwise regression analysis.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					Adjusted R Square	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1. (Constant) Attitude	0.526 ^a	0.277	0.271	0.49634	0.277	44.775	1	117	0.000
2. (Constant) Awareness	0.574 ^b	0.330	0.318	0.47984	0.053	9.185	1	116	0.003
a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude, Awareness c. Dependent Variable: Ecopreneur Intention									

The above (Table 7) regression analysis shows that both awareness and attitude significantly predict ecopreneurial intention. Attitude contributes 27.1% to the variance of ecopreneur intention. When awareness is included in the regression model, the change increases with the contribution marginally to 31.8%.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

A CFA is performed on data from 119 respondents collected through an analysis of moment structures (AMOS) version 23. In modeling the structural model, the study assessed the measurement model for unidimensionality, validity and reliability requirements. The model and summary assessment for fitness indexes of the study for the latent variable is presented in Figure 1 and Table 8 respectively.

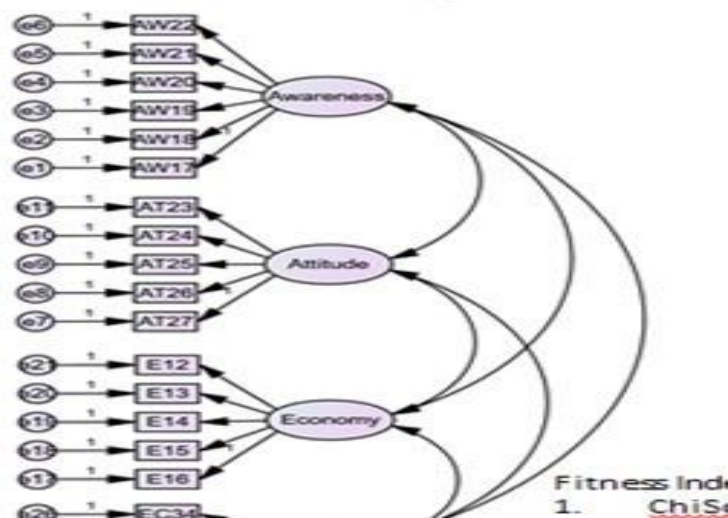


FIGURE 1
MEASUREMENT MODEL TO EXAMINE DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY FOR LATENT CONSTRUCTS

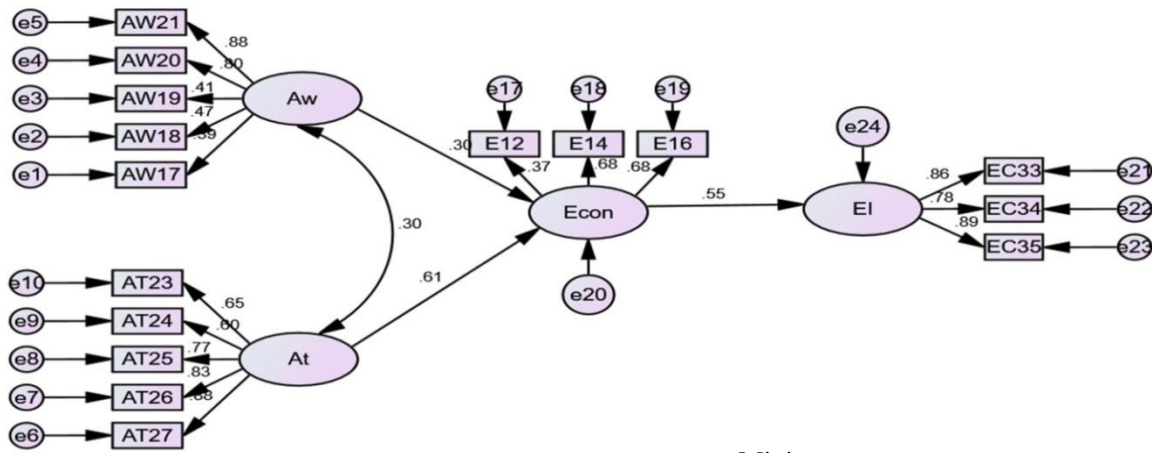
Table 8
THE SUMMARY OF FITNESS FOR THE MEASUREMENT MODEL OF EXOGENOUS CONSTRUCTS

Name of Category	Name of index	Level of Acceptance	Index Value	Comments
1. Absolute fit	RMSEA	0.08 < RMSEA < 0.8	0.069	The requirement level is achieved
	GFI	0 < GFI < 1.0	0.817	The requirement level is achieved
2. Incremental fit	CFI	0.7 < GFI < 1.0	0.817	The requirement level is achieved
3. Parsimonious fit	ChiSq/df	Chi Square/df < 5.0	1.558	The requirement level is achieved

Moderation Factors in Ecopreneurial Intention

The study uses SEM in determining the role of moderator on ecopreneurial intention within an independent study. In this note, economy factor is used as the moderator in a causal relationship between the independent variables (awareness and attitude) and dependent variable (ecopreneurial intention).

To test whether there is an interaction between the independent variables (awareness and attitude) and moderator (economy) towards the dependent variable (ecopreneurial intentions); the study has created and tested the analysis using a Sequential Equation Modelling (SEM).



Minimum was achieved Chi-square = 158.391 Degrees of freedom

**FIGURE 2
MODERATING VARIABLE IN STUDY**

The analysis shown in Figure 2 above depicts the standard coefficient or beta regression weights. On the other hand, to confirm on the hypotheses for each construct, Table 9 below summarizes the relationship and thus will determine whether economy moderates between awareness and attitude with ecopreneur intention.

Awareness to Economy

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 2.005 in absolute value is .045. In other words, the regression weight for IV (awareness) in the prediction of moderator (economy) is significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Attitude to Economy

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 3.09 in absolute value is 0.002. In other words, the regression weight for IV (attitude) in the prediction of moderator (economy) is significantly different from zero at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Economy to Ecopreneur Intention

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 0.421 in absolute value is .674. In other words, the regression weight for Econ in the prediction of EI is not significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Awareness to Ecopreneur Intention

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 1.31 in absolute value is .190. In other words, the regression weight for awareness in the prediction of ecopreneur intention is not significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Attitude to Ecopreneur Intention

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 3.627 in absolute value is less than 0.001. In other words, the regression weight for attitude in the prediction of ecopreneur is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level (two-tailed) shows in Table 9.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Economy	←	Attitude	0.218	0.070	3.090	0.002
Ecopreneur Intention	←	Attitude	0.413	0.114	3.627	***
Economy	←	Awareness	0.318	0.159	2.005	0.045
Ecopreneur Intention	←	Awareness	0.332	0.253	1.310	0.190
Ecopreneur Intention	←	Economy	0.129	0.307	0.421	0.674

DISCUSSION

The study had empirically tested and developed a model that shows a better understanding on the relationship between awareness, attitude, economy and the ecopreneurial intention. To reflect with the research questions, the component awareness and attitude is investigated over the intention to be and cope with ecopreneurial intention. Additionally, the study proposed economy component as a moderator to link between these variables. The result entails analyses that proof the significances of each hypothesis.

In conclusion, Table 10 summarizes the hypothesis results of mediation test for the study.

			Estimate	P	Results on Hypothesis
Economy	←	Attitude	0.218	0.002	Significant
Ecopreneur Intention	←	Attitude	0.413	***	Significant
Economy	←	Awareness	0.318	0.045	Significant
Ecopreneur Intention	←	Awareness	0.332	0.190	Not significant
Ecopreneur Intention	←	Economy	0.129	0.674	Not significant

Notes. *** p-value < 0.01; ** p-value < 0.05; * p-value < 0.10

From the above analysis, it is therefore concluded that both attitude and awareness is significant in supporting the economy factor to be the moderator in determining the intention for Malaysian entrepreneur to engage with ecopreneurial business. The study also reveals that an individual with strong attitude able to make them choose a career as ecopreneur. On the other hand, awareness and economy component do not confirm a decision to involve with ecopreneurial business activity.

IMPLICATION

The findings indicated significant inference to academics, industry and globalization. Albeit entrepreneurial activities contributed to the nation and country economic factor, the awareness of protecting the earth is vital.

LIMITATION

There are several limitations acknowledged. However, the study only screened Malaysian potential ecopreneur with regard to Malaysian demographic, ecology and local weather. Another limitation discovered is the study did not scrutinize the impact towards local economy achievement and contributions. Hence, the above suggestions set as a standard for further research.

FUTURE STUDIES

Future study should focus to the other country with different ecology and weather conditions in larger samples. Additionally, it is strongly recommended for the future studies to conduct comparative analysis by exploring the fundamental principle of the economic factors on the country's legislative issues and constraints.

CONCLUSION

The hypothesis model of this study fits well with the data structure. It proves that the implication of economy towards awareness and attitude is generally successful in shaping the potential ecopreneurs. However, it is found that without any other supports and details, awareness and economy factor is not significantly trigger the local Malaysian to engage with ecopreneurial business field.

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