Economics and Business Students' Buying Interest in Eco-Friendly Products: An Analysis of AJZEN's Economic Sociology

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ABSTRACT

In this era of globalization, consumers are increasingly aware of environmental issues. Consumer behaviour towards environmentally friendly products is a concern in economic sociology. The writing of this article aims to explore the analysis of economics students' behaviour towards environmentally friendly products. This research uses a literature study method, which will involve analysing data from several economics and business students in various universities. Environmental awareness, knowledge of environmentally friendly products, economic factors, and social factors are important factors in the decision making of a consumer. Economics and business students as consumers who are aware of environmental issues tend to choose environmentally friendly products. This is of course also influenced by economic factors and consumer social factors. The results of this study provide knowledge in understanding the consumer behaviour of economics and business students towards environmentally friendly products. The practical implication of this research is that environmentally friendly product companies targeting economics and business students need to consider factors that will influence consumer decision making, including effective and efficient pricing and promotion.

Keywords: Costumer Behavior, Eco Friendly, Environment, Students

ABSTRAK


Kata Kunci: Perilaku Konsumen, Ramah Lingkungan, Lingkungan, Mahasiswa
1. Introduction

In this period of globalization, environmental issues have become a concern in various fields, including in the academic discipline of economic sociology. Environmental issues such as environmental degradation and ecological crises dominate the global conversation, and encourage people to consider the social and economic impacts of all their actions.

To meet the needs of life, humans not only compete with other humans, but also with other living things such as animals and plants in getting the needs of life (Chiras & Daniel D, 1999). This, directly and indirectly, has an impact on the environment. To minimize the negative impact of this activity, responsibility is needed. For example, in 2014, only 18.84% of the Indonesian population was able to sort household waste (Central Statistics Agency, 2017). One action that shows environmental responsibility is green marketing. Green marketing is an organizational or company effort to design, promote, price and distribute products that do not harm the environment (Nanere M, 2010). Green marketing is increasingly popular among consumers because people are increasingly concerned about the environment and want to contribute to preserving the environment.

This article discusses the factors that influence the behaviour of economics and business students towards environmentally friendly products, so as to provide deep insight into the factors that influence the buying interest and consumption behaviour of economics and business students towards environmentally friendly products. (Southerton Dale et al., 2004) argue that consumption activities can be realized through routine and normative activities formed through collective activities and the results of self-reflection activities. He also argued that consumption activities are built on norms and conventions resulting from daily activities. The results of research from (Awuni JA & Du J, 2016) prove that the consumption of environmentally friendly products is carried out on the basis of motivated social and emotional values, not by functional values. From here means, creating environmentally friendly products (green consumption) can be done by changing the lifestyle and behaviour of the surrounding community so that it can have a social and emotional influence on the surrounding community.

The discipline of economic sociology provides a theoretical foundation that understands the relationship between individuals and economics in the context of consumption behaviour. Using the perspective of economic sociology, we can analyze the factors that influence the behaviour of economics and business students in choosing environmentally friendly products, such as knowledge, attitudes, and concern for the environment. The sociological theory used in analyzing the behaviour of economics and business students is the "Theory of Reasoned Action". A study from Yadav & Pathak (2017) proves that SDGs apply to environmentally friendly consumption. This theory was proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1991 which is a development of the previous theory, namely the "Theory of Reasoned Action" (Theory of Reasoned Action). Based on the concept of (Ajzen Icek, 2005) in the Theory of Reasoned Action, a person's intention to buy environmentally friendly products is determined by three determinants, namely Attitude toward Behaviour, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behaviour Control.

In this study, literature study methods were used to collect data and information relevant to the research topic. This research is expected to contribute in increasing the awareness and behavior of economics and business students towards environmentally friendly products.

2. Method
2.1 Types of Research

This research uses the method of literature study or literature research. The literature study method is a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data, reading and recording, and managing research materials (Zed, 2008). Researchers use various literature to obtain research data and use a qualitative approach because the data produced is in the form of words or descriptions. Literature studies can be obtained from various sources such as journals, books, and the internet. In this study, research was conducted by utilizing studies which are similar or related (Purwando, 2008).

2.2 Research Population

Research population is a generalized area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics determined by researchers to be studied and then drawn conclusions (Sugiyono, 2011). The population used for research is students who are studying in economics study programs at various colleges or universities.

2.3 Object of Research

According to (Arikunto, 2016), the object of research is the scope or things that are the subject matter in a study. The object of study is the behavior of economics and business students towards environmentally friendly products.
2.4 Data Analysis
Muhadji Noeng (1998) suggests that the definition of data analysis is an effort to systematically search and organize records of observations, interviews, and others to increase the researcher's understanding of the case under study and present it as a finding for others.

To further clarify the analysis of abstracts and full text, journals are read and examined. The summary of the journal is then analyzed on the contents contained in the research objectives and research results / findings. The analysis method used uses journal content analysis. Content Analysis is research that is an in-depth discussion of the content of written or printed information in the mass media. This technique facilitates understanding by analyzing the truth through the opinions of scholars which are then used as research references.

3. Result and Discussion
3.1 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)
The Theory of Reasoned Action It began with research in the 1950s conducted by Ajzen and Martin Fishbein. This theory was developed in 1967, then continued to be revised and expanded by Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein. This theory is structured with the assumption that humans behave consciously and take into account existing factors. Ajzen revealed that a person's intention to do and not do something is influenced by two basic factors, related to attitude (attitude towards behavior) and related to social influence or subjective norms (subjective norms). This theory is an improvement over the pre-existing theory Information Integration Theory. The theory of reasoned action arose because studies on behavioral theory were less successful. Two important points were born in addition, namely the theory of reasoned action does not only predict a behavior as it existed in the previous theory and the theory of reasoned action uses two elements in the form of attitudes and norms.

Sommer (2011) says that human actions can be triggered by a number of diverse or potential reasons. This indicates that a person's beliefs about the consequences of an attitude or behavior, beliefs about expectations of others' actions, and the presence of factors that might inhibit that behavior can play an important role. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) states that human behavior or actions are influenced by a desire or intention. Reasoned action theory links belief, attitude, intention, and behavior. Will is the most accurate indicator of one's actions, which means that to understand one's actions, the best step is to understand the desires of that individual. However, one can also make judgments based entirely on completely different reasons (rather than always based on desire). A key concept in this theory is focus of attention or displeasure, which involves consideration of things that are considered important. Will, which is determined by subjective attitudes and norms, is a major component (Jogiyanto, 2007). Attitude refers to the profit-and-loss assessment of a behavior, including consideration of the outcome of that behavior. In addition, subjective or social norms involve individual beliefs about how and what people think are considered important, as well as the individual's motivation to follow those views.

In accordance with the Theory of Information Integration, attitude factors are divided into two main components, according to (Ajzen Icek & Fishbein Martin, 1980). The first component is the evaluation and strength of belief in something. The second component, namely the strength of belief, greatly influences the intention to perform a behavior, the prevailing (subjective) norms, and subjective norms which are an individual's perception or view of social pressures or beliefs of other individuals that can influence the intention to do or not perform the behavior. Subjective norms consist of two more components, namely normative beliefs (considering what other individuals want of themselves as part of a particular society or group) and motivation to obey (how important it is for individuals to obey or disobey other individuals' expectations of themselves and their behavior).

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Subjective norms, unwittingly, can influence individuals, and even through the use of norms, an individual can influence others. Therefore, there are several options that allow one individual to influence other individuals, such as strengthening beliefs about attitudes, strengthening evaluations of attitudes, weakening forces that are contrary to persuasive goals, forming new attitudes with the strength of beliefs and evaluations that support persuasive goals, and so on. The theory of reasoned action has three steps, namely:

a. This theoretical model predicts a person's behaviour from his intent.
b. The intent of behaviour can be predicted from two main variables: a person's attitude toward behaviour and his perception of what others should be.
c. Attitudes toward behaviour are predicted using the values-expectations framework that has been introduced.

In short, practice or behaviour according to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) depends on intention, which in turn is influenced by subjective attitudes and norms. An individual's attitude is influenced by beliefs regarding the outcome of actions that have been performed before. On the other hand, subjective norms are influenced by normative beliefs about the opinions of others and the motivation to adhere to those opinions. More simply, this theory states that a person will do an action if he sees it as something positive and believes that others want him to do it.

After several years, (Ajzen, 1991) conducted a meta-analysis and concluded that the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) applies only to behaviours that are completely under the control of the individual due to the presence of factors that can inhibit or thwart the transformation of intention into behaviour. In response to the analysis, Ajzen then added a factor related to individual control, namely Perceived Behaviour Control (PBC).

3.2 Green Products

Green products are products that are friendly or not harmful to the environment, either during the production process or when consuming them. According to (Utomo Tri, 2015) Green products can be interpreted as products that have considered environmental aspects throughout their life cycle starting from the extraction of raw materials, production processes, transportation, use and after the product is no longer used so that it has minimal impact on the environment. According to (Pankaj K.A & Vishal K.L., 2014), Green products present product options that are manufactured using organic materials, reducing energy consumption, eliminating toxic materials, as well as reducing the impact of pollution and waste. (Duril Fabien et al., 2010) Defines environmentally friendly products as products that are planned for design and / or contain materials that can be recycled, so as to reduce negative impacts on the environment or reduce pollution over the entire life of the product. Meanwhile, according to article 1 of the Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia Number P.5 / MenLHK / Setjen / KUM.1 / 2/2019 concerning Procedures for the Application of Eco-Friendly Labels for the Procurement of Environmentally Friendly Goods and Services, environmentally friendly goods and services are goods and services, including technology that has applied the principles of environmental conservation, protection and management.

Eco-Friendly Product Criteria outlined by (D’Souza et al., 2006) In his research stated that green products, or environmentally friendly products, are products that not only provide benefits to consumers but also provide
perceived social benefits related to environmental care. Some aspects of green products or environmentally friendly products include:

1. **Product Perception**: Consumers perceive green products or environmentally friendly products as products that do not harm animals and the environment.

2. **Packaging**: Product packaging reflects certain elements and gives the impression of interconnectedness with environmental care, which can be seen by customers.

3. **Content Composition**: Recycled materials are used to justify use within certain limits, as well as general usage claims to a lesser extent, with minimal environmental impact.

   According to (Ottman et al., 2006), eco-friendly products are usually durable, non-toxic, and made from recycled materials. Eco-friendly products are easy to recognize because they generally have a label (ecolabelling). Ecolabelling requires that every merchandise must pay attention to the sustainability of resources and ecosystems in the environment. This involves the entire product life cycle, from the extraction of raw materials such as wood, transportation of raw materials to the factory, manufacturing processes in the factory, delivery of products from factory to consumer, use of products, to waste disposal (including used products), with the aim of not causing pollution to the environment. (Gill et al., 2009) explained that ecolabels and related standards not only serve as protection for consumers, but also protect manufacturers by preventing them from making false claims. In addition, he elaborated that ecolabels are an effective communication tool. By labelling companies, eco labels provide an easy means for companies to communicate to consumers that they are entities that care about the environment.

   The price of environmentally friendly products does tend to be higher than products that do not pay attention to sustainability aspects. This is due to various factors, such as higher production costs due to complex production processes, the continuation of the materials used, and a lot of time. Although at first, eco-friendly products may seem more expensive compared to their less sustainable alternatives, this price trend is starting to change. Along with the increasing awareness of the importance of environmental conservation, many companies are investing in more environmentally friendly production technologies and processes. This opens up the potential to increase production efficiency, reduce waste, and ultimately, reduce production costs. Thus, some environmentally friendly products can experience price reductions, making them more affordable for consumers. These changes create opportunities for consumers to make more sustainable choices without having to sacrifice significantly financially, making eco-friendly products not only an ethical choice, but also more economically accessible.

### 3.3 Green Marketing

Green marketing is "a marketing response to environmental influences derived from the design, production, packaging, labelling, use, and disposal of goods or services," Lampe and Gazda (1995) in (Setiyaningrum Ari et al., 2015). According to Mintu and Lozada (1993), cited by Lozada HR, (2000), defines green marketing as the application of marketing tools to facilitate change that can provide satisfaction to the organization and achieve individual goals, specifically related to the maintenance, protection and conservation of the environment. Green marketing involves the integration of a number of activities that include product modification, changes in production processes, packaging modifications, and adjustments in advertising strategies. Green marketing should consider the promotional efforts used to gain consumer support for environmentally friendly products (Dahlstorm Robert, 2011).

The process of implementing green marketing is influenced by several external factors, including the purchase of environmentally friendly products by consumers. The potential success of implementing green marketing depends on consumers who choose environmentally friendly products. In addition, the role of suppliers is also a critical factor in the implementation of green marketing in the company. Without support from suppliers, the implementation of green marketing can face significant obstacles. Political aspects, pressure from the organization, and cooperation also play an important role in the success of green marketing in the company.

On the other hand, there are internal factors that affect the implementation of green marketing, one of which is the product. The success of implementing green marketing can be seen from the nature of products that do not harm consumers or the environment in the long term. In addition, the promotional aspect in green marketing can be realized by saving costs, time, and space, with online promotion being an effective and efficient solution for companies that implement green marketing. Price and distribution channels are also important factors, where exorbitant prices or improper distribution channels can hinder the success of such green products in the market.

The idea of green marketing emerged as a response to public perception that business activities in general have a negative impact on the natural environment. Therefore, green marketing aims to involve businesses in
environmental conservation efforts, while changing people's negative views of the company's business activities. In implementing a green marketing strategy, these steps cannot be separated from the concept of marketing mix. As previously revealed by researchers, Haryadi Rudi (2009), that marketing strategy and marketing mix are closely related. In the context of green marketing, the marketing mix is focused on creating products and services that pay attention to environmental issues, both in the selection of production raw materials and in marketing strategies. Green marketing manipulates four elements of the marketing mix in the 4Ps: product, price, place, and promotion to sell the products and services offered using the advantages of environmental maintenance formed from waste management.

1. Product
   According to Ginsberg JM & Bloom PN (2004) "The product is at the core of the green marketing mix and the most important element in a green marketing strategy of the whole element."

2. Price
   "In most cases the price of green products is higher than regular products, which means there is a premium price. So the pricing strategy in green marketing strategy is to balance and combine consumer price sensitivity and environmental brevity. Due to price sensitivity, price can determine a factor for consumers when facing a choice between green products and regular products. Consumers usually will not pay the premium price and only choose green products when they know the same price, but the quality and condition are different from ordinary products." (Queensland Government, 2006)

3. Place
   "Promotional elements in the green marketing mix include various activities such as paid advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing and on-site promotion" (Queensland Government, 2006)

4. Promotion
   "Marketers should place their products as widely as possible because most consumers will not be looking for green products just for the sake of it but need these products displayed in front of them" (Queensland Government, 2006).

Green marketing, at this time, is a great opportunity to implement the latest marketing strategies. Green marketing helps improve production cost efficiency through product recycling programs. The success of green marketing can be seen in the results of production that uses environmentally friendly raw materials, creating green products. Aspects to note in the environmental context include reduction of industrial waste and improvement of energy efficiency (Ottman et al., 2006).

In green marketing, it is not only about offering environmentally friendly products to consumers, but also includes the production and distribution process of these products. Marketing that focuses on environmental sustainability is a new trend in the marketing world, and is a strategic opportunity that has the potential to provide multiple benefits (Allen A & CH. Manongko, 2011).

3.4 Buying Interest of Economics and Business Students

Buying interest is the phase in which consumers make a decision among several brands available in their choice, and ultimately make a purchase on the option they choose most (AG Suyono et al., 2012). This is a step in the buying process where the consumer involves various considerations before finally deciding to buy a product or service. Buying interest refers to a person's interest or desire to acquire or buy a product or service by seeking additional information (Schiffman Leon G, 1997). It covers the psychological and emotional aspects that motivate individuals to make purchases.

Buying interest can arise for a variety of reasons, such as functional needs, aesthetic values, or emotional impulses. Factors such as product quality, price, brand, and consumer experience can affect a person's buying interest. Buying interest analysis is important in marketing because it helps companies understand consumer behaviour and design effective marketing strategies to meet market needs and wants. According to (Nulufi et al., 2015), Consumers who show a positive view of a product or brand tend to show interest in buying the product or brand. Some of the factors that shape consumer buying interest according to (Kotler Phillip & Keller Kevin Lane, 2009) that is:

1. The attitude of others, the extent to which the attitude of others reduces one's preferred alternative will depend on two things, namely:
   a. The intensity of the negative traits that others have towards the consumer's preferred alternative
   b. Consumer motivation to obey the wishes of others

   1) An unanticipated situation, this factor will later be able to change the consumer's stance in making purchases. This depends on the consumer's own thinking, whether the consumer is confident in deciding whether to buy an item or not.
Consumer interest develops through motives based on attributes that suit their needs in using a product. Therefore, the analysis of how the process of interest develops in consumers becomes crucial. The best approach to influencing a consumer's interest is to understand his thoughts deeply. Thus, we not only obtain information in general, but also understand how it processes that information and how we can optimize it. This concept is known as "The Buying Process". Based on several sources, there are five purchasing processes, namely:

1. **Need recognition**: The stage where consumers realize the need or desire to buy a product or service.
2. **Information search**: The stage where consumers are looking for information about the product or service they want to buy, either through the internet, friends, or other media.
3. **Evaluation of alternatives**: The stage where consumers evaluate the various alternative products or services available, taking into account criteria such as price, quality, brand, and other features.
4. **Purchase decision**: The stage where the consumer makes the decision to buy the product or service that has been chosen.
5. **Post-purchase evaluation**: The stage where consumers evaluate their satisfaction after purchasing a product or service, which can influence future purchase decisions.

According to (Siswoyo Dwi, 2007) Students can be defined as individuals who are studying at the university level, both public and private or other institutions at the same level as universities. Students are considered to have a high level of intelligence, sharp thinking skills, and the ability to plan actions well. The ability to think critically and respond quickly and appropriately is a characteristic that students generally possess, creating complementary principles in their approach.

Based on the results of the study (Harahap et al., 2023), It was explained that students in Medan City, including the University of North Sumatra, carried out consumptive behaviour by buying certain goods or products excessively due to the motivation to form a self-identity. Many students choose the School of Economics and Business because it provides an in-depth understanding of the principles of economics, business and management. Those enrolled in this faculty study micro and macroeconomic concepts, understand business strategies, and develop analytical skills to deal with rapid changes in the business world.

Special characteristics are inherent in students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, reflecting the complexity and demands of the field of study. They are known to have a high level of intellect, critical thinking skills, and toughness in planning and carrying out actions. This skill is particularly relevant given that the business world often requires smart decisions, in-depth analysis, and quick responses to economic changes. Students in this faculty also have good communication skills, because interpersonal interaction and information presentation are important aspects in the business world. They are trained to work in teams, understand market dynamics, and respond to innovations to changing economic conditions. Thus, students not only learn theoretical concepts, but are also empowered to apply those knowledge and skills in real-world situations. This forms students who are ready to face the challenges of the business and economic world with the intelligence, analytical skills, and leadership needed.

The buying interest of students in the Faculty of Economics and Business is closely linked to their understanding of economics and consumer behaviour. With a strong knowledge of economics, students tend to have an informed buying interest. They are able to understand the factors that influence purchasing decisions, such as price, quality, brand, and marketing strategy. The analytical skills students acquire in evaluating alternative products or services at this faculty can also influence their buying interest. The ability to devise and plan actions, honed during the study, can increase their interest in certain products or services that are considered to have added value or relevance to the economic principles studied.

In addition, students at the Faculty of Economics and Business are also trained to understand the psychological aspects of consumers, which can influence buying interest. They can read market trends, understand consumer behavior, and identify business opportunities that might meet market needs. Overall, students’ buying interest in the Faculty of Economics and Business is not only consumptive, but also based on a deep understanding, critical analysis, and a sound understanding of the economic principles that guide their purchasing decisions.

### 3.5 Buying Interest of Economics and Business Students based on Reasoned Action Theory

The buying interest of students in Economics and Business can be analyzed using the Theory of Reasoned Action. According to this theory, the decision to make a purchase is influenced by rational factors and individual considerations. Here is an explanation of how this theory can be applied to the buying interest of Economics and Business students:
1. **Intention**
   In the context of Reasoned Action Theory (TRA), it becomes a strong predictor of subsequent behavior, such as buying interest. If a student has a high intention to buy an eco-friendly product, this reflects a strong desire to turn the intention into concrete action, which is to make a purchase of the product. Intention is considered the main determinant of behavior, since the level of desire to perform an action tends to influence the extent to which the individual will carry out the behavior. In the context of interest in buying environmentally friendly products, students who have positive intentions tend to be more likely to actually make purchases of these products. A positive attitude towards eco-friendly products and support from the social environment (subjective norms) can increase a person's intention to buy the product.

2. **Attitude**
   Attitude refers to an individual's evaluation or assessment of environmentally friendly products. In this context, if a student majoring in Economics and Business has a positive attitude towards the product, it means that they see the product with a favourable point of view. For example, they may believe that the product has a positive impact on the environment or is compatible with their sustainability values. A positive attitude can be triggered by the belief that the use of environmentally friendly products will provide positive benefits for the environment, such as reducing carbon footprints or supporting sustainable production-practices. A positive attitude can also emerge if students see the product as consistent with the values of sustainability or social responsibility they value. For example, if a product is manufactured using environmentally friendly materials or marketed with practices that support sustainability, then students with those values are most likely to have a positive attitude towards the product. A positive attitude towards environmentally friendly products tends to influence the formation of a positive intention to buy the product. So, students with a good attitude towards the product will most likely have the desire to make a purchase of the product in the future.

3. **Subjective Norm**
   Subjective norms include the perception of Economics and Business students on the expectations of those around them, such as friends, family, or lecturers, regarding the purchase of environmentally friendly products. This reflects how students perceive support or encouragement from their social environment towards the purchase decision of the product. If students feel that their social environment encourages or provides positive support for the use of eco-friendly products, their subjective norms will increase. For example, if their friends are active in choosing environmentally friendly products or if their family values environmentally responsible consumption practices, this can increase subjective norms. A social environment that provides support or positive pressure towards the purchase of eco-friendly products can contribute significantly to the formation of positive intentions to buy such products. College students who feel that their decisions are supported by the social environment tend to have a higher intention to make a purchase. Inequalities in expectations from the social environment, where students feel positive pressure to buy eco-friendly products, can create strong subjective norms and increase the likelihood that they will shift those intentions into purchase actions.

4. **Perceived Behaviour Control**
   This theory emphasizes the perception of Economics and Business students on the extent to which they have control over the purchasing process. This includes their understanding of the factors that affect their ability to execute a purchase, such as time availability, product accessibility, and availability of funds. Students will consider a variety of factors, such as whether they have enough time to make a purchase, the extent to which the product is easily accessible, and whether they have sufficient funds to purchase eco-friendly products. These factors can contribute significantly to their perception of control over the buying process. If students feel in control of their time, they may be more likely to have the intention to purchase eco-friendly products. For example, if they feel they have enough time to consider well and make a purchase without rushing, their purchase intent may increase. The perception of the extent to which the product is easily accessible also plays an important role. If these eco-friendly products are available in places that are easily accessible to students, it can increase their control over the purchasing process. Control over the availability of funds is also an important factor. If students feel that they have enough funds to purchase the product without causing financial inconvenience, they will most likely have a higher purchase intent.

4. **Conclusion**
   Student attitudes towards eco-friendly products, which are influenced by positive assessments of environmental impact and consistency with sustainability values, are important factors in shaping purchase intent. A good attitude towards the product tends to increase the likelihood of a purchase. A student’s perception
of the support and expectations of a social environment, such as friends, family, or professors, can influence subjective norms. If they feel supported, subjective norms will increase, giving a positive boost to purchase intent. Factors such as time availability, product accessibility, and availability of funds play a role in students' perceptions of control over the purchasing process. If college students feel they have enough control, their buying intentions tend to be stronger. Intention acts as a link between attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of control with purchasing behavior. Positive intentions are a strong predictor of concrete actions to purchase environmentally friendly products.

By understanding the interaction between attitudes, subjective norms, perceptions of control, and intentions, it can be concluded that to increase students' buying interest in environmentally friendly products, it is necessary to engage strategies that reinforce positive attitudes, increase social environmental support, and provide adequate perceptions of control over the buying process. Thus, the application of the principles of Reasoned Action Theory can be an effective foundation in designing marketing efforts and approaches to turn intent into concrete actions of purchasing environmentally friendly products.

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