
4C's of Marketing and Going Green : Will it Work with Malaysian Consumers ?

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Abstract

Development of knowledge on consumer behavior needs an appropriate understanding of factors that can influence their purchases. This study investigates factors that can possibly influence sustainable food consumption among young and educated population in Malaysia with the objective to gain overall insight on attitudes toward consumption, forces influencing sustainable consumption and factors inhibiting environmental friendly green marketing. The study also analyzes how the marketing strategy of 4Cs (Consumer needs, Cost, Convenience and Communication) can be adopted to change consumer behavior and how this marketing strategy is likely to impact on sustainable consumption.

The study is based on the theoretical concept of planned behavior model (Ajzen, 1988). A questionnaire method of survey was administered for a sample of 456 young educated adults from three universities of Malaysia. Results reveal that Consumers' needs, Cost, Convenience and Communication (4CS) influence people's concerns for sustainable food consumption which may not transform into actual purchases. Therefore, this research finds the need for adopting marketing strategies to orient young educated population towards sustainable food consumptions.

Keywords: *Sustainable consumption, planed behavior model, Green marketing*

Introduction

It appears as if only purpose of human in the globe is fulfilling endless needs and desires. Technology is used to support human greed through creating new products. It is surprising that the success of an economy is measured in terms of production of these products. The world often ignores that the processes of production carried on through inappropriate use of electricity, waste of the energy and constantly polluting air. We cut trees causing extinction of animals or disrupting their natural habitats for satisfying human greed. With the mask of a human, we are chewing the surrounding environment and spitting out waste and destroying the planet just like

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a giant monster that multiply rapidly and transfer this way of behavior to the next generation. Blaming alone would not be productive.

There is a growing awareness and concern among some of us on environment Degradation. Over the past decade, a section of population is opting for natural foods and health issues. The sustainable food consumption has become an important issue in food industry. Given the promise of high demand, food industry has a strong potential for developing and offering stainable foods to the market. This study may provide precious information to make efficient decisions by marketers and Governments for promoting sustainable and environment friendly consumption. This study can be useful for consumers in orienting their preferences towards above goal.

Green Marketing

The first concept of green marketing was proposed in 1975 in a workshop on the ecological marketing by American Marketing Association. In this workshop, the definition of green marketing analyzed positive and negative aspects of marketing activities associated to pollution and consumption of energy as well as natural resources. (Henion and Kinnear, 1976).

Later, Polonsky (1994) introduced his own definition as "Green or Environmental Marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occur with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment". This definition considers the roles of both consumers and factories.

The Green purchase behavior is defined as buying products with the above mentioned properties. It seems achieving sustainability is a slow and difficult process. There are seated barriers that are deeply rooted in our attitudes and beliefs which must be discovered and then should be changed for green marketing behaviour.

Unpredictable Consumer Behaviour

Erdman, 2008) indicates that the green movement has a strong impetus as the term "going green" had 15.6 Million hits on Google in January 2008 and 31

million hits just over two months later. Academicians along with marketing practitioners struggle to identify and realize consumer attitudes beliefs towards green products and to expand market offerings that meet these needs (D'Souza et al., 2005).

Nowadays, a number of consumers comprehend that their purchasing behavior has a direct impact on many ecological problems (Laroche et al., 1996). Concerns for environmental issues represent predilection of human beings which affects their behavior in a positive or negative manner (Chan, 1996). These predispositions are commonly referred as attitudes and beliefs (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) and environmental concern is a strong attitude towards preserving the environment (Crosby et al., 1981). A series of beliefs with the combination of cognitive or evaluation create an attitude (Heberlein, 1981). One person may hold a lot of beliefs about an object but researches shows that a relatively small number of those beliefs can contribute as an attitude.

In reality, companies that pursue green marketing encounter numerous challenges mainly from the variability of demands, un-favorable consumer perception and high cost (Gurau and Ranchhod, 2005). The key concern lies in an understanding of green consumers and their characteristics to enable firms to develop a new target and segmentation strategies (D'Souza et al., 2007).

Malaysian Food Habit

Food is the basic need for all human beings to support life; therefore, consumers have the right to choose good quality and safe foods for their own consumption. Three factors which are most considered by the consumers with regards to food, are food safety, protection of the environment and animal welfare (Fraser, 2001).

Green foods consist of two groups. The first group of green foods keeps allowance for a certain limit of chemicals but the second group believes in dependence on organic foods. Therefore, the first group lays a good foundation to develop the second group. Consumers consume green foods or green products when their needs and wants for quality, availability, convenience, performance, and affordability are met along with consumers realization

that green foods and products can help to solve environment problems (Ottman, 1999).

Food consumption patterns in Malaysia have changed due to the rapid expansion of the economy over past two decades with an economic growth around 6% per year since 2000. Moreover, this has resulted in the rapid growth of food industry and agricultural products. Relatively high population growth and fast growth in per capita income among Malaysians have changed consumer preferences for food toward a more healthy and nutritious lifestyle. Consumers now have stronger purchasing power and more choice when purchasing and consuming foods. Therefore, more people demand healthier, safer, hygienic, environmentally friendly and higher quality foods (Abdul, 2009). In Malaysia, consumers have been giving low importance on food safety concerns but they have a higher level of health consciousness (Shaharudin et al., 2010). Abdul (2009) found that in Malaysia, consumers who are concerned about their health and environment most likely have a positive attitude towards green foods.

Marketing referents to influence Pro-Environmentally concern: 4C's of Marketing

Consumers' concern over the environmental conservation and their awareness of the environmental problems and actions can be perceived as pro-environmental attitude. Concern about environment, the degree of overall orientation and emotional involvement denote the value of environment conservation and the level of awareness. Individuals with a strong concern about nature are more likely to buy green goods in comparison to other. Many empirical researches have shown a direct and positive relationship between environmental concern and green behavior. The study of Lee (2008) also discovered that consumers with high ecological concerns tended to purchase eco-friendly products. He investigated consumers' buying the insecticide products in Hong Kong, and concluded those young customers were not strongly influenced by their environmental concerns. In other parts of the world among western publication, Kasier et al (1999) found a meaningful relationship between environmental concerns and environmental treatment. In summary, individuals' cognitive about environment determines

their behavior on protecting environment. Having studied the impacts of ecological concern on attitudes, this study aims to analyze the relationship between increasing concern about environmental conservation that influence purchase behavior.

Health consciousness

Over the last few years, consumers have been worried over the quality of food they eat especially after the numerous global crises like the spread of mad cow disease and foot-and-mouth epidemic. In addition, increasing environmental knowledge is reflected in increasing request for green products which are sensed to be less harmful to the environment and safer. The most important reason of consumers' willingness towards sustainable food and sustainable consumption appears to be health concerns. It has been proved by recent studies that organic and environmental friendly (Green) products are safer than conventional products. However, it has been shown in studies of Vermeir and Verbeke, (2004) and Padel and Foster, (2005) that consumers' main reason for the purchase and consumption of sustainable products is not their environmental concerns in the first place; they give priority to their own health. They further state that consumers are ready to pay a premium for safe food. Health consciousness has been identified as the primary motive for the sustainable purchase behavior. This study by using the TPB of Ajzen (1991) examines how the social psychology alongwith marketing strategies of 4Cs (cost convenience, communication and consumers needs) to influence the buyer's choice of food among Malaysian young consumers.

Cost

The price has been explored to be a major element in many studies on consumers' purchase behavior. An upsurge in the number of buyers who are ready to pay a premium for green products can be considered the most influencing confirmation of the rise of ecology-conscious buyers (Laroche et al., 2001). However, some variables like the type of food, the absolute price of the item and the relative expense of a normally produced good can determine the extent to which buyers are desirous to pay more for organic foods. It has been found by Williams and Hammitt

(2001) that those consumers who have never bought or usually don't buy organic products are more likely to consider the price compared to those who are already buying organic foods.

Convenience

Most consumers prefer to go shopping close to their houses, on their ordinary way to work and in a way that can save time as well as money. Even if they are really concerned about buying green products, they cannot obtain the product in daily life if these are not available easily. Results of Nihan Mutlu, (2007) showed that respondents feelings of exhaustion and starving, rush to shopping and cooking after work and they don't spend much time to look for ecofriendly products. Findings of a survey by Padel and Foster, (2005) in UK demonstrated that 25% of respondents do not know even where they should search for green products and also 35% of them looked hard for green products at least one time. Results of several studies have proven that the green food's availability now in stores is a barrier to consumer purchase. Even though the consumers' motivation or intention towards the purchase of specific products is high, low availability of green products makes it impossible to transform the intention into practice (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2004).

Communication

Producers have two ways to raise trustworthiness between themselves and consumers; the first one is direct contact between the producer and the consumer to explain detailed information about products. Labeling or standardized information providing on products is the second way that shows product attributes. The only way that consumers identify authenticity is labeling (Peter Midmore, et al, 2005) of green and organic products which are produced at large scale and sold in supermarkets.

Brown (2003) stated that buyers' trouble in identifying eco-friendly goods is partly on account of the absence of information. It's believed by D'Souza et al. (2006) that goods' information is a major factor that can impact an individual's intention towards the purchase of products. It has been found that consumers get information on the green products from labels before

deciding to purchase them. Rashid's (2009) in his study found eco-label to be a crucial factor that gives consumers necessary information regarding environmental effects of the product that they wish to purchase and enabling them to choose correctly. Yet no significant relationship was found by other researchers (i.e. Rahbar, 2008) in their study linking eco-label and green buying behavior. Without the label, consumers may not be able to acquire necessary information about the characteristics and value of products. So labeling is believed to play an important role while consumers are worried about their health, saltiness of food, potential product risks, and so forth. Labeling efficaciously impacts consumer demand patterns, enables them to judge product attributes.

Sustainable consumption

The sustainable consumption can be considered as the twin sister of sustainable development. The best explanation of sustainable consumption is suggested by Oslo Symposium (1994) as "the use of services and related products which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations". Sustainable consumption addresses the demand side, looking at how the goods and services meet basic needs and improve quality of life in ways that reduce the burden on the earth's carrying capacity (Nick Robins and Sarah Roberts, 1997).

Personal benefits such as price, quality, convenience, and brand familiarity have traditionally motivated consumer purchases. Weatherall et al. (2003) claim that some other factors concerning the public benefits of products labeled with sustainable attributes seem to also have been influencing the decision criteria of a minority consumers. Sustainable food consumption hold a very low interest in spite of increasing concerns about sustainability. This can be explained on the basis of what has been claimed by Ajzen (2001) as attitude-behavior gap. Attitudes, studied in isolation, are poor predictors of behavioral intentions in the marketplace (Ajzen, 2001). For example, as mentioned by Ajzen & Fishbein (1974), consumers'

viewpoint toward sustainable food may not certainly be pursued by their favorable behavioral intentions.

Research Question

Many empirical literatures have revealed increasing social concerns for environment in various regions of the globe. The sustainable Consumption is a bridge to preserve natural resources for the next generation. In this particular research, researchers tried to explore research questions such as:

1. How the consumption pattern of Malaysian consumers is oriented towards sustainable consumption?
2. How the four C's of Marketing are influencing the consumption pattern of the young Malaysian?

Research Problem

Obviously, consumers demand and their choices in market drive producers' strategies. An appropriate understanding of consumer behavior, prior and after adaptation of green marketing strategy have significant correlation with green and sustainable purchases practices. Several studies with different models presented cause and effect variables of consumer behavior which revealed the importance of this issue. In the other word, influencing buyers' perspectives is a major key for developing sustainable purchasing behavior.

Throughout this study, the researchers attempted to explain the existing gap between attitude and consumer's buying behavior of sustainable foods. More

precisely, the basic principles of marketing strategies (4Cs) as perceived behavioral factors of purchase intention for different segments of consumers are examined here. The results offer some general strategies and marketing recommendations for motivating consumer to opt for sustainable food.

The study have tested following hypotheses on the basis of information collected through surveys.

Hypothesis

H1: There may be significant relationship between pro-environmental concern on Malaysian consumers and their intention to sustainable food consumption

H2: There may be significant relationship between health consciousness of Malaysian consumers and their intentions to sustainable consumption.

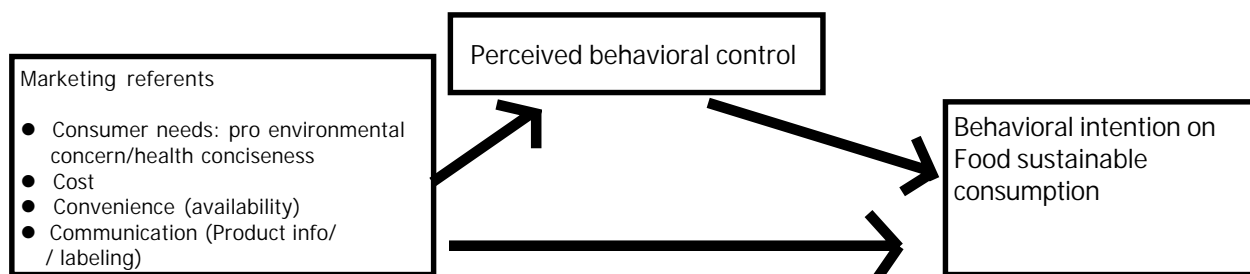
H3: Economic influence (cost / price consciousness) may have direct and positive influence on consumer's intentions to buy sustainable consumption.

H4: Situational factors (availability/convenience) may have direct and positive effect on consumer's intention to sustainable food consumption.

H5: Visual cues (availability of product info / eco-label) may have positive influence on consumer's intentions to sustainable consumption.

Conceptual Model of Proposed research :

The theoretical structure of this research is on the basis of TPB (Ajzen, 1991) modified to reflect individual consumer attitudes towards sustainable consumption.



Methodology

Research Design

This research is a cross sectional in nature where the purpose is to describe the influence of market referent factors on the purchasing behaviour of Malaysian consumers. The study follows descriptive design as follows.

Sample Population

The Malaysian educated young people represents a large percentage of the population influencing purchases. This segment has considerable purchasing power which warrants the attention of marketers and government. Studying these consumers' attitudes and buying behavior is critical in order to establish a more viable movement toward environmentally-friendly understanding. This segment has been chosen because they play an important role in future consumption models.

Sampling

The simple random sample method has been considered for this research to select the respondents from three universities e.g. University College of

Medical Sciences (CUCMS), University College of Lim Kok Wing, Multimedia University - Cyberjaya Campus (MMU) during February 2011. These educational institutes comprise of different races and genders offering different major courses. The survey questionnaires were distributed both through hand-delivered and electronic media. Almost equal representation of each group was considered to arrive at representative sampling size.

Reliability and validity of tools

Maximum acceptable values of the relative error for mentioned sample population size has been considered equal to 0.1. Reliability test was conducted independent variables (i.e., market referent), and dependent variable (purchasing intention). The values of Cronbach's alpha of variables are shown in table 1. As shown, the reliability coefficient exceeded the minimum acceptable level of 0.60 (Nunnally, 1978).

The results show the Cronbach's Alpha value for dependent variables, brand perception & buying behaviour, and for the independent variable green marketing, are all above 0.7 which is considered as good, and acceptable.

Table 1: Factor Analysis

SI No	Factors	% of variance explained	Cronbach á
1	Market referent behaviour	0.2010	0.790
2	Purchasing intention	0.2119	0.801

Analysis and Results

As mentioned earlier, there are five hypotheses have been identified and addressed in this research.

Pro-Environmental Concern

Hypothesis1: *There may be significant relationship between pro-environmental concern on Malaysian consumers and their intention to sustainable food consumption*

Table 2:

Regression analysis – Pro- Environmental Concern and intention to sustainable consumption					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1 Regression	.114	1	.114	.219	.641
	38.529	174	.521		
Residual	38.643	175			
Total					

Table 3: Coefficient - Pro- Environmental Concern

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Mean Square	CR	Sig
	B	Std Error			
1 (Constant)	3.801	.264	-.054	14.418	.00
Pro-environmental Concern	-.037			-.468	.641

Results of this analysis were portrayed in Table 2 and Table 3. According to Table 2, the P-value of 0.641 that is greater than 0.05. Association between two variable is not significant and hence there is no significant relationship between pro-environmental concern of Malaysian consumers and their intention to buy sustainable foods.

Health Consciousness

Hypothesis 2: *There may be significant relationship between health consciousness of Malaysian consumers and their intentions to sustainable consumption.*

Table 4:

Regression - Health Consciousness and intention to sustainable consumption					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1 Regression	3.69134.952	1	3.691	7.814	.007
	38.643	174	.472		
Residual		175			
Total					

Table 5: Coefficient - Health Consciousness

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Mean Square	CR	Sig
	B	Std Error			
1 (Constant)	2.648	.379	.309	6.98	.000
Health Consciousness	.298	.107		4	.007
				5	

The outcomes of this analysis are portrayed in Table 4 and 5. According to Table 4, the P-value that is not bigger than 0.05. Hence association between two variables is significant. The results of Table 5 confirms that health consciousness is positively associated with intention of sustainable purchase behavior.

Economic Influence

Hypothesis 3: *Economic influence (cost / price consciousness) may have direct and positive influence on consumer's intentions to sustainable consumption.*

Table 6:

Regression - Analysis - Economic Influence and intention to sustainable consumption					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1 Regression	5.474	1	5.474	12.212	.001
	33.169	174	.448		
Residual	38.643	175			
Total					

Table 7: Coefficient - Economic Influence

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Mean Square	CR	Sig
	B	Std Error			
1 (Constant)	2.663	.302		8.816	.000
Economic influence	.298	.084	.376	3.495	.001

Outcomes of this analysis are portrayed in Table 6 and Table 7. According to table 6, the P-value of 0.001 that is not bigger than 0.05 and is statistically significant. The outcome confirmed that economic influence is positively associated with intention of sustainable purchase behavior. As shown in Table 7, economic influence (B=.295, Sig= 0.001 < 0.05) is directly predicting dependent variable. Hence, economic influence (cost/price consciousness) has a direct and positive effect on consumer's intention to sustainable food consumption.

Situational Factors

Hypothesis 4: *Situational factors (availability/convince) may have direct and positive effect on consumer's intention to sustainable food consumption.*

Table 8:

Regression - Analysis - Situational Factors and intention to sustainable consumption					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1 Regression	.492	1	.492	0.954	.332
	38.151	174	.516		
Residual	38.643	175			
Total					

Table 7: Coefficient - Situational Factors

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Mean Square	CR	Sig
	B	Std Error			
1 (Constant)	3.450	.253	.113	13.643	.000
Situational factors	.085	.087			

Outcomes of this analysis are portrayed in Table 8 and Table 9. According to Table 8, the P-value of 0.332 that is greater than 0.05 and hence is not significant. There is no significant relationship between situational factors and their intention to sustainable food consumption.

Visual Cues

Hypothesis 5: *Visual cues (availability of product info / eco-label) may have positive influence on consumer's intentions to sustainable consumption.*

Table 10:

Regression - Analysis - Vishual Cues and Consumer's intentions to sustainable consumption					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1 Regression	15.202	1	15.202	47.990	.000
	23.441	174	.317		
Residual	38.643	175			
Total					

Table 7: Coefficient - Vishual Cues

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Mean Square	CR	Sig
	B	Std Error			
1 (Constant)	1.685	.296	.627	5.695	.000
Vishual cues	.570	.082		6.927	.000

Outcomes of this analysis are shown in Table 10 and 11. According to Table 10, the P-value of 0.000 of which is lesser than 0.05 and hence significant and H5 is accepted. According to the result of Table 11, it is confirmed that visual cues are positively associated with intention of sustainable purchase behavior. As shown in Table 11, visual cues (B= .570, Sig= 0.000 < 0.05) are directly predicting dependent variable. As a result, visual cues (availability of product info/ eco-label) have a direct and positive effect on consumer's intention to sustainable food consumption.

Discussion

The objective of the research was to analyze the relationship between market referents and the consumer intentions towards environment-friendly

purchase on the basis of 4C's of Marketing. The study indicates that the 4 C's of marketing in some way or the other correlated to Malaysian consumer's buying behaviour.

Then, food habits of people vary from country to country and region to region. People of some country are well aware of the utilitarian perspectives of green products. While some others countries are very much pro-towards non vegetarian foods. The findings of the present research indicate that Malaysian consumers are not so pro-towards green products and green consumption habit. In this context. Brown (2003) stated that buyers trouble in identifying eco-friendly goods is partly on account of the absence of information. It's believed by D'Souza et al. (2006) that goods information is a major factor that can impact

an individual's intention towards the purchase of products. It's been found that consumers get information on the green products from their labels before deciding to purchase them. Consumer decision based on less awareness about the nature consequence will always leads to green consumerism and not green consumption. Consumer's attitude is the reflection of their awareness and belief system which influence their purchasing behaviour.

Findings (table no 3 & 4) related to health consciousness indicate that Malaysian consumers are very much mindful about their health. The contradictory feature is that even though people are conscious about their health, they are less aware about green products and nature friendly products which are better for their health. For the sake of own and family health, consumers are willing to purchase environmental friendly products. Studies of Vermeir and Verbeke, (2004) and Padel and Foster, (2005) rightly pointed out in this context consumers' main reason for the purchase and consumption of sustainable products is not their environmental concerns in the first place. They give priority to their own health. Health consciousness has been identified as the primary motive for the sustainable purchase behavior. Individual health consciousness is one among factors which contribute to Malaysian consumers positive attitudes towards going green and buying environmental friendly products. The research observes more self-orientation than environmental orientation of Malaysian consumers in their purchasing behaviour.

The finding related to the economic condition of the consumers shows that higher income group have the capacity to purchase green products. People in the middle and lower income community purchase green products for different logic. Research shows that prices of the green products are higher than those of other products. Again, research points out that there is an upsurge in the number of buyers who are ready to pay a premium for green goods. This is considered to be most encouraging trend of emergence of ecology-conscious buyers (Laroche et al., 2001). Findings of the present research are that Malaysian consumers purchasing behaviour of green products are influenced by better health

considerations and self-orientation rather than environmental effects. Other consideration such as the quality of food, the price and the relative expense of a normally produced goods are determining factors on intention to buy green products for consumers. Even lower income group is interested to purchase green products with premium price on health consideration rather pro-environment or ecology preservation consideration. Thus, Malaysian consumers are less pro-environmental in nature.

The result (table no 9 & 10) clearly indicates that the Malaysian consumers are influenced by visual cues. This indicates the importance of the marketing and sales promotion on Malaysian consumers. In general, people are attracted towards product features like colors, packaging, labeling, text, shape, size etc. Higher the information a company share about products to the consumers, higher is the response products get from the market. The only way that consumers identify authenticity of green and organic foods which are produced at large scale and sold in supermarkets, is through labeling (Peter Midmore, et al, 2005). Proper eco-labeling and detailing information about the green products can attract more customers towards green products. Rashid's (2009) in his study found eco-label to be a crucial factor that gives consumers necessary information regarding environmental effect of the product that they wish to purchase thus enabling them to choose correctly.

Conclusion

Although sustainable buying has not yet become a part of sustainable attitudes. Giving more information to buyers and bringing more social pressure on buyers could influence their buying decisions. This involves educating buyers about their ability to influence on the environment. Businesses may require participation in order to focus on the overall environment's wellbeing. Besides, the process of marketing can be used to educate to individuals on how these influence the environment. While the question of how the motivation of the people to be environmental consciousness is still remains ambitious, it is expected that those who have relevant information, are more likely to go in the sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.

Results of this research show that marketers should use different strategy and rely on other aspect of their art and capability to change the pattern of purchasing and consumption behavior of consumers. The current study investigated this topic through examining consumers' perspectives, social consensus, pressure to purchase environmentally-friendly foods, individual consciousness and other confrontational variables.

It is expected that the outcomes of this research would provide sufficient information for Governmental, Non-Governmental managers and marketers to plan better a road map for consuming and producing environmentally-friendly foods. In addition, more researches would be conducted in similar areas to shed lights on different angles of this issue. Once these research studies are done properly, and then environment friendly foods can be marketed effortlessly.

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