

RGC Ref. No.: UGC/FDS16/B13/18 <hr/> (please insert ref. above)
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**RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL  
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR  
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

**FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)**

**Completion Report**

*(for completed projects only)*

<p><b><u>Submission Deadlines:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within <b>six</b> months of the approved project completion date.</li> <li>2. Completion report: within <b>12</b> months of the approved project completion date.</li> </ol>
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**Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)**

**1. Project Title**

Investigating Impacts of Problem Ownership and Ascription of Responsibility on Sustainable Consumption Behaviour

**2. Investigator(s) and Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved**

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	CHU Kevin Wing-ki / Senior Lecturer	Lee Shau Kee School of Business and Administration, Hong Kong Metropolitan University
Co-Investigator(s)	NA	NA
Others		

**3. Project Duration**

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval <i>(must be quoted)</i>
Project Start Date	1 / 1 / 2019	NA	
Project Completion Date	31 / 12 / 2020	30 / 6 / 2021	7 / 9 / 2020
Duration <i>(in month)</i>	24 months	30 months	7 / 9 / 2020
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31 / 12 / 2021	30 / 6 / 2022	7 / 9 / 2020

## **Part B: The Final Report**

### **5. Project Objectives**

#### 5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. To investigate young people's beliefs about the ability of governments and businesses to deal with environmental degradation and climate change
2. To investigate to what extent young people ascribe environmental responsibilities to governments and businesses
3. To investigate the extent to which (1) and (2) have a positive or negative impact on young people's intention to act pro-environmentally
4. To explore the reasons for (3)

#### 5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: NA

Reasons for the change: NA

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#### 5.3 Realisation of the objectives

*(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)*

##### Objectives 1 and 2

The study aimed to investigate young people's beliefs about the ability of governments and businesses to deal with environmental degradation and climate change (objective 1); and the extent to which they ascribe environmental responsibilities to governments and businesses (objective 2). The study included pre-survey and post-survey focus groups and a survey with university students.

The findings of both the focus groups and survey revealed that young people in Hong Kong held a generally positive view towards the efficacies of the governmental and

business effort in managing the environmental degradation and climate change. They generally believed the governments were capable of containing the environmental problems and should take the lead. Most shared the view that governments should have taken more and stricter measures in guiding the business and individual behaviours. They ascribed the responsibilities for the current worsening climate change to the governments rather than businesses. It seemed that young people shared a strong mistrust in the intention of the businesses and saw the business efforts as greenwashing or getting a license to operate in response to the public pressure. That being said, they seemed to accept the notion that businesses should maximize the profits for their shareholders, despite the fact that such a notion had long been criticized to be short-sighted both in the academia and the business sector.

### Objective 3

The 3<sup>rd</sup> objective of the study was to look at the potential impacts of their young people's beliefs and business efficacies and their ascription of responsibilities on their pro-environmental intention. The findings showed the perceived government and business efficacies were both positively correlated with the young people's pro-environmental intention, mediated by their ascription of the responsibilities to both the public and business sectors. The correlation is found stronger between the government efficacies and the young people's pro-environmental intention, than the business efficacy, indicating that people's trust in the competence of the government in managing environmental pollution could potentially affect people's participation in any environmental campaign. The hypothesized causal relationship was then assured by the findings of the follow-up focus groups.

### Objective 4

The findings of the post-survey focus groups indicated that young people's positive belief about governmental and business efforts in tackling the environmental problems exerted a complementary effect on their pro-environmental intention. When some young people were hopeful about the future of mankind as a result of learning about the effective governmental and business initiatives in containing the climate crisis, they perceived their own pro-environmental actions such as recycling, resorting to greener products and reduction in energy and plastic consumption as more meaning contribution to the environmental protection campaign. Some of those who were more skeptical about the effects of the governmental and business efforts were less motivated to do so as they did not see their actions significant enough to slow down or stop the environmental degradation.

The four objectives were achieved. The studies were potentially subject to strong social desirability bias and efforts were made in the lead-in of the focus groups to minimize such bias. All in all, these studies have served as a good starting point to establish a link between the perceptions about the effectiveness of pro-environmental efforts put forward by the public and business sectors and the young people's pro-environmental intention.

## 5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

<b>Objectives</b> <i>(as per 5.1/5.2 above)</i>	<b>Addressed</b> <i>(please tick)</i>	<b>Percentage Achieved</b> <i>(please estimate)</i>
1. To investigate young people's beliefs about the ability of governments and businesses to deal with environmental degradation and climate change	✓	100%
2. To investigate to what extent young people ascribe environmental responsibilities to governments and businesses	✓	100%
3. To investigate the extent to which (1) and (2) have a positive or negative impact on young people's intention to act pro-environmentally	✓	100%
4. To explore the reasons for (3)	✓	100%

## 6. Research Outcome

## 6.1 Major findings and research outcome

*(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)*

The major findings of the studies are as follows:

Ascription of Responsibility to the Government

Young people generally shared the belief that the Governments had the ability to slow down environmental degradation and, therefore, young people tended to ascribe more responsibilities to the government rather than the private sector or individual consumers. A majority of young people shared a strong mistrust in the genuine interest of the business sector in handling the environmental issues. More surprisingly, they seemed to hold a sympathetic view that businesses were meant to maximize profits for its shareholders even at environmental and social costs. Both the individuals and businesses might not feel strongly responsible as long as the law allows them not to consume in a sustainable way. The young people, therefore, asserted that the government should take the lead in legislation and law enforcement (see Attachments 1 and 2).

It is worth noting that some young people expressed disappointment with the environmental work the government has done. They explicitly expressed willingness in complying with stricter pro-environmental measures such as higher levy for plastic shopping bags and the introduction to garbage levy although these may mean inconvenience and higher living expenses (see Attachment 4).

### Link between Businesses' and Governments' Efficacy and Pro-environmental Intention

The positive correlation between the perceived government or business efficacies and the young people's pro-environmental intention have dismissed the worry that diffusion of responsibility would lead to young people's inaction. In other words, the effect of the government and business efficacies was largely complementary rather than compensatory. Celebrating the environmental triumphs in the public discourse would not lower people's anxiety about climate change nor discourage them from consuming in sustainable ways. Rather, talking about environmental victories and offering hopes seemed to enhance young people's pro-environmental intention (see Attachment 2).

### From Pro-environmental Intentions to Behaviours

It was revealed by the studies that some young consumers with a pro-environmental intention had a conception that to be green did not mean one has to be environmentally conscious in all aspects of life, because, in their views, it was not all practically attainable. Young people did not suffer strong sense of guilt for adopting non-environmentally-friendly products because they consumed responsibly in some other aspects of life. It was also found that certain high-involvement consumption behaviours seemed to be subject less to the influence of their pro-environmental intention (See Attachment 1). To facilitate the translation of pro-environmental intention to behaviours, business practitioners could tie the environmental friendliness of the products tightly to the product effectiveness (see Attachments 1 and 3). Policy makers should look into the possibilities of configuring policies; and laying down regulations and stringent standards to ensure that the business sector keep the environmental costs as low as possible and shaping consumers' habits, since it is over-simplistic to assume that raising consumers' awareness of environmental problems and publicising environmental achievements of the governments and the businesses would not necessarily lead to the behavioural change of young consumers.

## 6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action (*Maximum half a page*)

The studies confirm that business and government efficacies potentially have a positive impact on young people's pro-environmental intention, mediated by their ascription of the responsibilities to the business and public sectors. That being said, computing the mediational model based only on the concurrent data set is far from enough to statistically assert a causal relationship among the constructs including business and government efficacies; people's ascription of responsibilities to the public and business sectors; and their pro-environmental intention. The further studies should include two- or three-wave longitudinal survey. The repeated surveys with the same groups of respondents at different times enable researchers to examine the direction of influences as suggested in the mediation model over time. Other studies could be conducted with different age groups and in other socio-cultural contexts to examine the existence and the strength of such a causal relationship. The second direction is to develop experiments in which their perceived effectiveness of the business and governmental efforts in managing the climate change are manipulated through reading news reports about environmental victories, and the pre- and post-reading surveys are used to measure their changes, if any, of their sense of responsibilities and pro-environmental intentions.

## 7. Layman's Summary

*(Describe in layman's language the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words)*

In the fast-growing research body in green consumerism, most studies attempted to profile green consumers or investigate the relationships between attitudes, social norms and behaviours in order to identify motivational drivers. However, very few analysed the attribution of causes and responsibilities for environmental problems to governments and businesses and its potential impacts on individual green consumption behaviour. Therefore, this research pioneered a new line of studies that aim to build the business practitioners' and policy makers' understanding of the impacts of the young people's perceived ability and the perceived share of responsibility of businesses and governments to tackle environmental problems on their pro-environmental intention. Two major implications were derived from the study. First and foremost, as the findings indicate that more positive perception of the governmental and business competence in tackling the environmental problems leads to a stronger willingness among young people to act pro-environmentally, celebrating the triumphs over the climate change in public discourse would probably encourage young people to consume in a more sustainable way. Secondly, young people tended to ascribe the responsibilities to the government rather than the business sector. They demanded stricter environmental regulations and enforcement while they were skeptical of genuine intentions of business efforts.

**Part C: Research Output****8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising Directly From This Research Project**

*(Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)*

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) (denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)	Title and Journal / Book (with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance (For paper accepted but not yet published)	Under Review	Under Preparation (optional)						
2020				Chu, K. W. K.	The green gap of high-involvement purchasing decisions: an exploratory study. <i>Asian Journal of Business Ethics</i> (2020) 9: 371-394	No	Yes [Attachment 1]	Yes	No
			2022	Chu, K. W. K.	Turning Good News into Bad? Exploring the Impacts of Government and Business Efficacies on Young People's Pro-environmental Intention	No	No	Yes	No

**9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered**

*(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)*

<b>Month / Year / Place</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Conference Name</b>	<b>Submitted to RGC</b> <i>(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)</i>	<b>Attached to this Report</b> <i>(Yes or No)</i>	<b>Acknowledged the Support of RGC</b> <i>(Yes or No)</i>	<b>Accessible from the Institutional Repository</b> <i>(Yes or No)</i>
October 2019 / Ann Arbor, USA	Compensatory or Complementary? An Exploratory Study on How the Government and Business Efficacies Interact with Young People's Pro-environmental Intention	The 2nd Annual Sustainability and Development Conference, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	Yes (Annual Progress Report submitted in Dec 2019)	Yes [Attachment 2]	Yes	No
December 2021 / Hong Kong	Defragmentation of Determinants of Sustainable Food Consumption: A Literature Review for Practitioners	The IIBG 5th Annual Academia-Industry Exchange 'Business as usual: How do we turn the new normal into normal? Hong Kong Metropolitan University, Hong Kong	No	Yes [Attachment 3]	Yes	No

**10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning**

*(Please elaborate)*

The research experience was once shared with the colleagues of the University in a research seminar on 16 September 2020. The enhanced understanding of young people's views towards the environmental responsibilities and work of the Government were once disseminated via an online book review article published on 23 June 2021 (Attachment 4).

**11. Student(s) Trained**

*(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Degree Registered for</b>	<b>Date of Registration</b>	<b>Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation</b>
NA	NA	NA	NA



**12. Other Impact**

*(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)*

NA

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**13. Statistics on Research Outputs**

	<b>Peer-reviewed Journal Publications</b>	<b>Conference Papers</b>	<b>Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters</b>	<b>Patents Awarded</b>	<b>Other Research Outputs (please specify)</b>	
<b>No. of outputs arising directly from this research project</b>	2 (1 published 1 under preparation)	2	0	0	Type	No.

**14. Public Access Of Completion Report**

*(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)*

<b>Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access</b>	<b>Reasons</b>
NA	NA