

# Team 7\_Fostering A Culture of Business Ethics: A Case Study of Nestlé

*by hanis zahira*

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# Fostering A Culture of Business Ethics: A Case Study of Nestlé.

Dr. Noor Fareen Abdul Rahim<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Jocelyne Lee Jia Lin<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Brahmanand Sharma<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Chanda Gulati<sup>4</sup>, Hanis Zahira Binti Harmony Ghani<sup>5</sup>, Gao Ming<sup>6</sup>, Guo Yinuo<sup>7</sup>, Hafisha Binti Mas Hassan<sup>8</sup>, Andra Aprillia Ayu Triana<sup>9</sup>, Yogita Pawar<sup>10</sup>, Kamini Tomar<sup>11</sup>, Kritika Mittal<sup>12</sup>, Daisy Mui Hung Kee<sup>13</sup>

Graduate School of Business, Universiti Sains Malaysia<sup>1</sup>,

Han Chiang University College of Communications<sup>2</sup>,

Associate Professor, Prestige Institute of Management and Research, Gwalior India<sup>3</sup>,

Assistant Professor, Prestige Institute of Management and Research, Gwalior India<sup>4</sup>,

School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia<sup>6,7,8, 13</sup>

Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia<sup>9</sup>,

Prestige Institute of Management and Research, Gwalior India<sup>10,11,12</sup>,

Correspondence Email: [haniszahira@student.usm.my](mailto:haniszahira@student.usm.my)

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## ABSTRACT

Nestlé is one of the largest food companies in the world, with presence in 191 countries and solid loyal customers. Nevertheless, a big organization like this cannot escape adverse ethical behavior in their company. Business ethics is the study of an organization's corporate governance and initiatives related to corporate social responsibility. Businesses have a moral obligation to give the public, stakeholders, customers, and the government the real worth of their money. Every firm engages in unethical practices for personal gain. This study aims to determine Nestle will be able to survive in the long run with its involvement in unethical practices. Furthermore, this study intends to find out whether their involvement affects the customers purchase intention to buy their product. An online survey has been conducted to gather more information and provide evidence to support the conclusions. A total of 100 respondents from Malaysia, Indonesia, and India participated in this study. The analysis demonstrated that brand awareness, business ethics and practice of business ethics impacts the customers purchase intention to buy Nestle products. This study offers insightful information about how consumers view Nestlé, which could help them increase consumer trust in their brand.

**Keywords:** Business ethics, consumer purchase intention, Nestlé, child labor, environmental damage, practice of business ethics, brand awareness

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Fostering a culture of business ethics has become increasingly important in today's globalized company climate (Treviño, L. K., & Nelson, K. A., 2016). Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk was established in 1866, marking the beginning of the Nestlé firm. With operations in over 190 nations and 308,000 workers dedicated to the company's goal of improving life quality and nurturing a healthy future, Nestlé is the largest producer of beverages and food in the world (Nestlé, 2022). Nestlé, however, made an error that shouldn't have happened and that will harm the company's reputation. In a letter to the editor, a group dedicated to upholding the principles of equality and fairness urged readers to steer clear of Nestle products because of the company's lengthy history of unethical business practices, especially when it involves the exploitation of natural resources and violations of human rights. Nestlé has come under fire for allegedly promoting the sale of infant formula over breast milk, especially in underdeveloped countries with limited access to hygienic conditions (Frankel, S., 2023). The world's longest-running boycott has been targeted against Nestlé, which is known for providing a wide variety of goods.

In a report published in October 2019, Nestlé was implicated in a number of alleged violations of workers' rights. Despite having adequate safeguards for important issues like forced labor, child work, freedom of association, and discrimination in its supply chain policy, Nestle's auditing and reporting systems were insufficient (Greenwald, R., & Sainato, M., 2019). Baby Milk Action has called for a boycott of Nestlé since 1988 due to its advertising of baby foods in violation of worldwide marketing regulations. A survey was created to better understand the connection between the purchase intentions of Nestlé customers and their understanding of corporate social responsibility. 110 responses were collected for the survey, which was part of a Nusantara Project research study. The relationship between customer brand awareness and the purchase intention of Nestlé has been studied. Brand awareness is divided into awareness of business ethics, consumer purchase intention, and practice of business ethics in the organization.

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## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is done to evaluate the relationship between three variables: brand awareness, business ethics and practice of business ethics

### 2.1 Brand Awareness

Brand is something that is very important today. The brand becomes an identity for a product so that consumers can be aware of the presence of a particular product. The brand clarifies the existence of competition, because the brand is a means of differentiating between one product and another so that a product does not become a generic product. A brand is described as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or layout, or a combination of these, intended for recognising the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to distinguish them from competitors" by the American Marketing Association (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Managing a brand is crucial since it helps your product stand out from the competition and be recognisable in the market. The ability of consumers to recognise a brand under diverse circumstances can be used to gauge

brand awareness because it is correlated with the strength of brand nodes or traces in memory (Keller, 2013). Brand awareness, according to Aaker (1991), is the ability of the consumer to recognise or recall that a particular brand belongs to a particular product category. According to him, consumers would feel more at ease while making a selection if they were familiar with the brand name. He also thinks that brand name awareness plays a significant influence in consumer decision-making. Unknown brands are not preferred by consumers. Customers are therefore more likely to choose a brand they are familiar with over one they are unfamiliar with due to great brand recognition. Therefore, it is clear that consumer purchase intention influences the brand awareness

H1: Brand awareness is linked to consumer purchase intention

## 2.2 Business Ethics

Ethics can be summed up as a system of moral rules that distinguish between right and wrong. Because it influences what a person should or shouldn't do, ethics is a normative subject of study (Yousif et al., 2018). A business is an organization that produces and sells goods and services that people want in order to make money. The products in question are goods since they can be perceived by the senses and have a physical form, whereas services are actions that benefit customers or businesspeople. (As'Had, 2001). Consumers are allegedly getting more worried with the ethical aspects of products, services, and business practices, this was based on the most recent studies on ethical behavior. Successfully managing these issues could have an advantageous financial effect on the company (Wong Szeki, 2012). This is due to the fact that whenever a person decides whether or not to purchase a commodity or service, they typically make decisions that can support a sustainable pattern of consumption. Each purchase has consequences for trash, ethics, and the community. People participate in a more difficult decision-making process when they consider adopting sustainable lifestyles. These regular choices on ethical or practical environmental solutions frequently lead to trade-offs between competing concerns (Moisander, 2007). Hence, we propose a link between business ethics and customer purchase intention.

H2: Brand awareness is linked to consumer purchase intention

## 2.3 Practice of Business Ethics

Every company endeavor depends on client happiness to succeed. The consumer always comes "first" and is followed by the profit whenever a business is just getting started. Businesses who are able to completely please their clients will continue to hold the top spots in the market. Customers' pleasure is a crucial factor for corporate success and, at the same time, is crucial for increasing market value, according to today's business organizations. A customer is someone who favors a store or a company that satisfies their needs and wants, or both. Customers purchase goods to fulfill expectations. Companies must therefore set pricing that reflects product quality in order to draw customers and keep long-term partners. 2019 (Rachmarwi). Customer satisfaction is closely related to business ethics. Customers are encouraged to forge enduring relationships with the company via business ethics. In the long run, this form of link enables the business to fully comprehend client demands and expectations. Companies can therefore improve customer satisfaction by maximizing positive client interactions while minimizing negative ones. Additionally, a business that follows ethical practices would have little trouble



winning the trust of its clients. Customers are more likely to stick with a company and make repeat purchases when their expectations are realized. Hence, we propose a positive link between practice of business ethics and customer purchase intention.

H3: Practice of business ethics is linked to consumer purchase intention

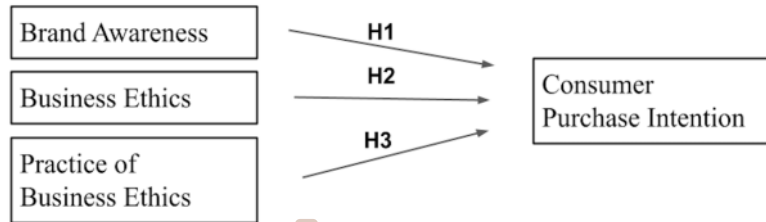


Figure 1: Research Framework

The research framework for this study is shown in Figure 1. Consumer purchase intention is shown as the dependent variable in Figure 1, whereas the independent variables are brand awareness, business ethics and practice of business ethics.

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH

#### Sample and Procedure

Each researcher has a unique strategy for gathering data for their studies. In fact, research can conduct its studies using both primary and secondary data. As a result, both primary and secondary data were employed in this investigation. For the primary data, 110 food consumers from the four participating countries—Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and China—were surveyed online using a Google Form. This survey investigates the impact of brand awareness, business ethics and practice of business ethics on consumers' purchasing intentions. Three different types of survey questions—likert scale, multiple-choice, and dichotomous—were used to design this survey. A five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree) is used to measure responses to questions. Furthermore, a question that has three viable responses is a dichotomous question. In surveys, dichotomous questions are frequently used to elicit agree/disagree responses. When it comes to multiple choice questions, they are frequently presented with square checkboxes that let respondents select every option that applies to them. The data was then examined using IBM SPSS Statistics 26, descriptive analysis, and multiple regression analysis. Additionally, this research used secondary data from journals, papers, and the internet.

Table 1. Summary of Respondents Profile (N=110)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	66	60
Male	44	40

<b>Age</b>		
18-24 years old	55	50
25-34 years old	13	11.8
35-44 years old	9	8.2
45-55 years old	20	18.2
Above 55 years old	13	11.8
<b>Nationality</b>		
Malaysian	65	59.1
Indonesian	17	15.5
Indian	16	14.5
Chinese	12	10.9
<b>Living Area</b>		
Urban	88	80
Rural	22	20
<b>Education Level</b>		
High school	8	7.3
Diploma	14	12.7
Bachelor's Degree	64	58.2
Master's Degree	21	19.1
Doctor of Philosophy	3	2.7
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Student	57	51.8
Employed	46	41.8
Unemployed	5	4.5
Retired	2	1.8
<b>Annual Income</b>		
No income	50	45.5
Less than RM25,000	20	18.2
RM25,001 - RM50,000	10	9.1
RM50,001 - RM100,000	14	12.7
RM100,001 - RM 200,000	13	11.8
RM200,001 or more	3	2.7

Table 1 displays a summary of the demographics of the respondents to this study. 44 (40%) men and 66 (60%) women made up the sample. (N=110). With 50% of the total respondents, the respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 made up half of the respondents. Respondents between the ages of 45 and 55 come in second with 18.2%. The number, 11.8%, is the same for both the 25–34 and over 55 age categories. Last but not least, the age group with the lowest percentage, 8.2%, is 35 to 44. Malaysia accounted for 59.1% of respondents' countries of origin. Indonesians would come in second with 15.5%, closely followed by Indians with 14.5%. About 10.9% of the survey participants were Chinese. Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents were

from urban areas, with the remainder respondents hailing from rural areas. According to the results, the majority of respondents (58.2%) had bachelor's degrees, followed by master's degrees (19.1%) and diplomas (12.7%). The final two were a doctor of philosophy with 2.7% and a high school diploma with 7.3%. In addition, 46 respondents were employed, while 57 were students. The final two are retired with two respondents and five unemployed respondents. In addition, 45.5% of respondents reported having no income. The fact that students made up the majority of the responders may be the cause of this. Accordingly, with 18.2%, 12.7%, and 11.8% respectively, the categories of less than RM25,000, RM50,001 - RM100,000, and RM100,001 - RM200,000 are next. There are only 9.1% and 2.7% of responders in the categories of RM50,001 to RM100,000 and RM200,001 or more, respectively.

#### 4.0 RESULTS

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, and Zero-order correlations of variables**

Variables	1	2	3
<b>1. Brand Awareness</b>	<b>0.388</b>		
<b>2. Business Ethics</b>	-0.157	<b>0.885</b>	
<b>3. Practice of Business Ethics</b>	0.268**	-0.098	<b>0.246</b>
Dependent Variable:			
<b>Consumer Purchase Intention</b>	0.260**	0.181**	0.566**
Mean	9.67	19.62	6.56
Standard Deviation	1.873	6.587	1.267
No. of item	4	10	2
<i>Note: N= 110; *p = &lt;0.01, **p&gt;0.01, ***p&lt;0.001. Bolded figures indicate Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha</i>			

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, and zero-order correlations of variables in the study. The first variable, Brand Awareness, has a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.388, indicating moderate internal consistency. The second variable, Business Ethics, shows a negative correlation of -0.157 with Brand Awareness and a high Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.885, indicating excellent internal consistency. The third variable, Practice of Business Ethics, has a positive correlation of 0.268 with Brand Awareness and a negative correlation of -0.098 with Business Ethics. It also exhibits a moderate internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.246. Moving to the dependent variable, Consumer Purchase Intention, it shows a positive correlation of 0.260 with Brand Awareness, 0.181 with Business Ethics, and 0.566 with Practice of Business Ethics. These correlations

suggest that higher levels of Brand Awareness, Business Ethics, and Practice of Business Ethics are associated with greater Consumer Purchase Intention. The means for the variables indicate an average score of 9.67 for Brand Awareness, 19.62 for Business Ethics, and 6.56 for Practice of Business Ethics. The standard deviations reveal the degree of variability within each variable, with values of 1.873 for Brand Awareness, 6.587 for Business Ethics, and 1.267 for Practice of Business Ethics. It is important to note that the sample size for the analysis is N=110. The significance levels (\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ) denote the statistical significance of the correlations, with \*\* indicating a significant correlation at  $p < 0.01$ .

**Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis**

Variables	Consumer Purchase Intention
Brand Awareness	0.137
Business Ethics	0.257
Practice of Business Ethics	0.550
R <sup>2</sup>	0.392
F Value	21.552
Durbin-Watson Statistic	1.757

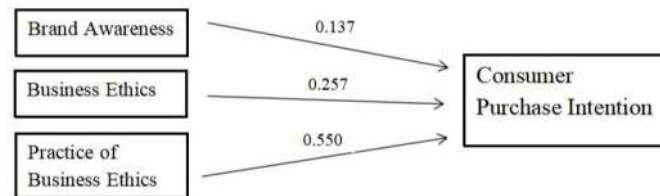
*Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$*

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Table 3 presents a summary of the regression analysis conducted to examine the relationship between the variables (Brand Awareness, Business Ethics, and Practice of Business Ethics) and the dependent variable (Consumer Purchase Intention). The regression coefficients indicate the strength and direction of the relationship. The regression coefficient for Brand Awareness is 0.137, indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship with Consumer Purchase Intention at  $p < 0.05$ . This suggests that higher levels of Brand Awareness are associated with increased Consumer Purchase Intention. The regression coefficient for Business Ethics is 0.257, indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship with Consumer Purchase Intention at  $p < 0.01$ . This suggests that a stronger emphasis on Business Ethics is associated with higher levels of Consumer Purchase Intention. The regression coefficient for Practice of Business Ethics is 0.550, indicating a positive and highly statistically significant relationship with Consumer Purchase Intention at  $p < 0.001$ . This suggests that actively implementing and practicing Business Ethics is strongly associated with increased Consumer Purchase Intention. The coefficient of determination, denoted as R, is 0.392. This indicates that the independent variables (Brand Awareness, Business Ethics, and Practice of Business Ethics) explain approximately 39.2% of the variation in Consumer Purchase Intention. The F value of 21.552 is significant, indicating that the overall regression model is statistically significant in predicting Consumer Purchase Intention. This suggests that the combined influence of the independent variables is significantly related to the dependent variable. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.757 is used to test for the presence of autocorrelation in the residuals of the regression model. A value between



1.5 and 2.5 indicates no significant autocorrelation. In this case, the value of 1.757 suggests no significant autocorrelation in the residuals. The regression analysis demonstrates that Brand Awareness, Business Ethics, and Practice of Business Ethics are important factors in influencing Consumer Purchase Intention, with Practice of Business Ethics having the strongest impact.



**Figure 2: Our Hypothesized Model**

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

The results show that practice of business ethics are strongly correlated with the customer's purchase intention. This is because the practice of business ethics is very crucial to the customers. A company that implements ethical procedures would easily gain the trust of the customers. Moreover, business ethics has a close relationship with customer satisfaction. By building a good and strong relationship with customers allows the company to thoroughly understand the customer expectations and their needs. When expectations of the customers are met, the likelihood of the customer to continue purchasing products from the brand is higher. Not only that, but the company could also gain trust from key stakeholders, such as investors and consumers, that could help develop and expand the company in the future. Altogether, this shows that brands which are truthful to their consumer have a higher chance of increasing the customer purchase intention.

This study also shows that business ethics is significantly impacted by consumer purchase intention. Consumers are allegedly getting more concerned with the ethical aspects of products, services, and business practices, according to the most recent studies on ethical behavior. If the company resolves these issues successfully, it might have a positive financial impact on the company. (Wong Szeki, 2012). This is on account of every time a person chooses whether or not to buy a good or service, they would usually make the choices that have the ability to support a sustainable pattern of consumption. Each purchase has consequences for resources, waste, ethics, and the community. People participate in a more difficult decision-making process when they consider adopting sustainable lifestyles. Trade-offs between opposing concerns are frequently the result of these routine decisions regarding moral or useful environmental solutions (Moisander, 2007). In conclusion, this shows that a company's business ethics have an impact on consumers' purchasing intentions.

Despite the fact that the results are lower than those for the other variables, the findings still suggest that brand awareness influences customer purchase intention. The buyer would feel more at ease while making a choice if they were familiar with the brand name. Unknown brands are

not preferred by consumers. Customers are therefore more likely to choose a brand they are familiar with over one they are unfamiliar with due to great brand recognition. Similarly, Grewal et al. (1998) hold that brand awareness plays a crucial role in determining consumer buy intentions and that particular brands will grow in customers' minds to influence purchasing intention of customers. An item with a significant amount of brand recognition will be more popular with consumers. This is because consumers typically opt to purchase brands they are familiar with and have faith in. Therefore, brand awareness influences the customer's purchasing intention.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS

Our research has shown that, as a result of numerous boycotts and ethical carelessness, the rate of ethical problems and corrupt practices has dramatically increased over time. Laws, ethics, and norms are distinct from one another, but although laws are universally recognized, ethics is based on personal convictions, even if both are intended to be consistent and not in conflict. Based on the research hypothesis that business ethics are related to user retention, the findings revealed that corporate reputation is the factor that most significantly affects user retention. This finding emphasizes the significance of taking corporate reputation into account as a strategy for market sustainability. Researchers claim that while reputation is not a quality that can be acquired "overnight," neglecting it could seriously harm an institution's reputation. As a result, they advise assertively managing reputation because it is both an intangible asset and a factor in determining the stability of an organization.

Additionally, from the perspective of public relations specialists, public image is a mirror of ethical acts, which advocates discouraging misconduct. Good ethical practices are thought to be a factor of organizational effectiveness and proactivity of continual improvement. To ensure the longevity of their organization in the business world, every institution should be encouraged to adopt ethical norms as a natural behavior. Business ethics help with retention; evidence exists that people expect that organizations integrate ethical values, moral principles, and codes as a value-added when evaluating a brand or company, which supports these findings. Corporate reputation and ethical business practices encourage customer loyalty, which helps with retention, boosts customers' buy intentions, and ensures that customers stay with the company, having a good and long-lasting effect.

Therefore, this study proposed a comprehensive model to determine how the organization will be able to survive in the long run with its involvement with unethical practices.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

In this age where numerous products and services are available in the market, the customer will go for which one is affected by various factors. This research is conducted to see the impact of business ethics and brand awareness on the purchase intention of the Nestle customers. The variables considered for the study are business ethics, practice of business ethics and brand awareness and the dependent variable is purchase intention of the customer.

The finding states that the business ethics performed by the firm and its brand awareness significantly impact the purchase intentions. As ethical behavior of the firm and brand recognition frame the perception in the mind of the customer about that firm and its products so due attention should be given to both the aspects. The finding of this research can be used by not only Nestle but also the other business firms that being ethical in the conduct is as important as the product so measures should be taken in this direction also, and this will help in establishing the business and sustainable development in the long run.

## 8.0 LIMITATIONS

There are few limitations in the study as well. As data is collected in online mode through google form and it is assumed that it is filled with due attention, but this assumption may be wrong. Research is about ethical aspects but it is not clear that respondents have proper knowledge about the meaning and importance of ethics. Majority of respondents are from 18-24 years of age group, and among them mostly are students who are not earners specifically. And of course the data collected is majorly limited to a few countries while the customers of Nestle are all across the world, the upcoming researchers who want to do research in this dimension can consider these limitations.





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