



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**INCLUSION OF KENAF AS BIO-MATERIAL COMPONENT IN
SUSTAINABLE MANUFACTURING IN MALAYSIAN AUTOMOTIVE
INDUSTRY**

AMIRA MAS AYU BINTI AMIR MUSTAFA

IPTPH 2019 14



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By

AMIRA MAS AYU BINTI AMIR MUSTAFA

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

March 2019

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Chair : Professor Mohd Shahwahid Haji Othman, PhD
Faculty : Institute of Tropical Forestry and Forest Product

Increase in societal demand for sustainability has resulted in attention to sustainable manufacturing. Many manufacturers often focus on the economic component sustainability, neglecting the environmental and social aspects. Natural fiber reinforced polymer composites (NFC) provides a practical alternative to synthetic fiber reinforced composites largely in automotive and building product applications. At the laboratory scale, kenaf fibers reinforced polymer composites (KFC) has been proven that it is technically feasible to be developed as part of automotive bio-material components. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether such potential applications could meet the environmental and economic sustainability measurements. As illustration, the supply chain process of spare wheel cover production was used for this purpose. The first objective of the study describes the use of life cycle assessment (LCA) of utilizing kenaf fiber composites for spare wheel cover production. A cradle to gate assessment was performed based on the ISO 14040/14044 guidelines. The aims are to identify the major hotspots and most significant contributions to environmental pollution. The second objective of the study is to conduct an economic valuation of the consumer preferences from the Klang Valley area on using natural fiber composites in certain components of their car. The double bounded dichotomous- choice contingent valuation method (CVM) could be used for this purpose to solicit the interests of consumers to make extra payments towards reducing the impact to the environment. The third objective is to frame out a financial and economic feasibility assessment of using Kenaf fiber composites in the production of the spare wheel cover. The environmental cost and economic value estimates of the intangible environmental and economic impacts obtained from the previous objectives are incorporated into the cashflows to enable the computation of an economic cost-benefit analysis (CBA). Incorporating the three elements of the above study could shed light as

to the environmental and economic sustainable development of Kenaf application into the automotive industry.

From the objective 1, between three phases in spare wheel production, the midstream phase has a higher contribution to the environment pollution with the total environmental cost of RM14,326.30 or 63%, followed by upstream phase and downstream phase with the total contribution 19% and 18% respectively. For objective number 2, all the variables in the double-bounded approach are significant at a different level except for GENDER and LENGTHOFUSE which is insignificant in the double-bounded approach and is therefore, eliminated from the model and the mean additional WTP ranges from RM11.51 to RM16.10 has achieved. For last objective, between three phase, only downstream phase was positive where the project is both financially and economically feasible. The positive result is due to the light-weight impact where the society could benefit with fuel saving and the corresponding reduction of CO₂ emissions and also the total additional WTP. To implement the project successfully, more effort is required to improve the feasibility of Kenaf fiber production. The challenge is in the low quality of local Kenaf fibers that will affect the quality of the production of automotive components. By overcoming these obstacles, the project will have huge positive impacts on both the sector and society

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENGUNAAN KENAF SEBAGAI BAHAN BIO-KOMPONEN DALAM
PEMBUATAN MAMPAN DI DALAM INDUSTRI AUTOMOTIF MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Peningkatan permintaan pengguna untuk kelestarian telah menyumbang kepada pembuatan mampan dalam sector industry. Kebanyakan industry sering menumpukan kepada kelestarian dari segi ekonomi berbanding kepada aspek alam sekitar dan social. Komposit polimer bertetulang gentian semulajadi (NFC) menyediakan alternatif praktikal kepada komposit bertetulang gentian sintetik terutamanya di dalam aplikasi produk automotif dan bangunan. Pada skala makmal, komposit polimer bertetulang gentian kenaf (KFC) telah membuktikan ia secara teknikal boleh dimajukan sebagai komponen komponen bio-bahan automotif. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti sama ada aplikasi berpotensi itu boleh memenuhi ukuran kemampunan alam sekitar dan ekonomi. Sebagai ilustrasi, proses rantai bekalan pengeluaran penutup pengganti tayar digunakan untuk tujuan ini. Objektif pertama kajian ini menerangkan penggunaan penilaian kitaran hayat (LCA) untuk menggunakan komposit gentian kenaf dalam pengeluaran penutup roda. Proses “cradle to gate” dijalankan menggunakan garis panduan ISO 14040/14044. Tujuannya adalah untuk mengenal pasti titik-titik panas utama dan sumbangan paling penting kepada pencemaran alam sekitar. Objektif kedua kajian ini adalah untuk melakukan penilaian ekonomi keutamaan pengguna dari kawasan Klang menggunakan komposit serat semulajadi dalam komponen tertentu dari kereta mereka. Kaedah double bounded dichotomous-choice contingent valuation (CVM) boleh digunakan untuk tujuan ini untuk menilai kepentingan pengguna dalam kesanggupan mereka untuk membayar lebih untuk mengurangkan kesan alam sekitar. Objektif ketiga adalah untuk membuat penilaian kemungkinan kewangan dan ekonomi menggunakan komposit serat Kenaf dalam pengeluaran penutup pengganti tayar. Anggaran kos persekitaran dan anggaran ekonomi dari kesan-kesan alam sekitar dan ekonomi yang tidak ketara yang diperolehi dari objektif-objektif terdahulu akan dimasukkan ke dalam aliran tunai untuk membolehkan pengiraan analisis kos-faedah ekonomi (CBA). Dengan menggabungkan ketiga-tiga unsur kajian di atas dapat memberi penjelasan mengenai pembangunan lestari alam sekitar dan ekonomi aplikasi kenaf ke dalam industri automotif.

Dari objektif pertama, di antara tiga fasa, fasa pertengahan mempunyai sumbangan paling tinggi terhadap pencemaran alam sekitar dengan jumlah kos pencemaran sebanyak RM14,326.30 atau 63% dan diikuti dengan fasa hulu dan hiliran dengan jumlah kos pencemaran sebanyak 19% dan 18% masing-masing. Bagi objektif kedua, kesemua pemboleh ubah adalah signifikan kecuali pemboleh ubah Jantina dan Jumlah Penggunaan Kenderaan dan julat purata tambahan kesanggupan membayar adalah dari RM11.51 sehingga RM16.10. Bagi objektif ketiga, di antara ketiga-tiga fasa pengeluaran, fasa hiliran adalah positif dari aspek kewangan dan ekonomi. Ini adalah disebabkan dengan mengurangkan berat kenderaan, kadar penggunaan minyak serta jumlah pelepasan CO₂ dapat dikurangkan. Penambahan kesanggupan membayar dari penggunaan kenderaan mesra alam sekitar juga menyumbang kepada hasil keputusan ini. Untuk keberkesanan projek ini, lebih banyak usaha-usaha yang perlu dilakukan dalam peningkatan kualiti dalam pengeluaran gentian kenaf. Di antara cabaran yang terpaksa dihadapi adalah pengeluaran gentian kenaf yang berkualiti rendah akan menjejaskan kualiti pengeluaran komponen automotive. Dengan mengatasi halangan-halangan ini, projek ini akan memberi impak yang besar kepada industry dan juga masyarakat.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
CM	Choice Modelling
CVM	Contingent Valuation Method
DALY	Disability Adjusted Life Years (Years of Disable Living or Years of Life Due to The Impacts)
DBDC	Double Bounded Dichotomous Choice
LCA	Life Cycle Assessment
LCI	Life Cycle Inventory Analysis
LCIA	Life Cycle Impact Assessment
MRKF	Mechanical Retted Kenaf Fibre
NAP	National Automotive Policy
NEAC	National Economic Advisory Council
NFRC	Natural Fiber Reinforced Composites
NKTB	National Kenaf And Tobacco Board
NPV	Net Present Value
PAF	Potential Affected Fraction (Animals Affected by The Impact)
PDF	Potentially Disappeared Fraction (Plant Species Disappeared as Result of The Impacts)
SBDC	Single Bounded Dichotomous Choice
SE	Surplus Energy (MJ) (Extra Energy That Future Generations Must Use to Excavate Scarce Resources)
WTA	Willingness to Accept
WTP	Willingness to Pay



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Sustainability has become an important issue in all spheres of life. Sustainability focuses on safeguarding natural resources against exploitation, in the name of productivity and competitiveness, by manufacturing and service organization. Sustainability has been widely discussed in the context of automotive manufacturing. According to Elkington (1997), this approach mirrors the “triple bottom line” of environmental, economic and social sustainability in community development. It is a major concern in many countries and is leading to strict regulations regarding the impact of products and services during their manufacturing, use and end of life.

The use of renewable resources for industrial materials satisfies many criteria in term of sustainable product life cycle. Companies around the world have shown interest in environmentally friendly manufacturing. Renewable raw materials have an interesting application potential in the automotive sector to replace petroleum-based material (Riedel et al, 2005). There are two major issues occurred for the current materials for internal car component; 1) high in cost and, 2) high of weight. Thus, by designing a combination of lightweight and strong biomaterials are strategies to develop advanced lightweight composite that can replace the traditional synthetic structures or metals which made as part of automotive component.

1.2 Background of the Study

New trends towards sustainable development have placed greater attention to natural, renewable, and biodegradable raw materials. With the current concern over the environment and greenhouse gas emissions, natural fibers are increasingly being considered as an environmentally friendly and biodegradable composites materials to substitute for synthetic fibers in the reinforced of polymer-based composites. The global natural fiber composites market was worth more than USD 3.36 billion in 2015 and is expected to reach USD 6.50 billion in 2021 (Natural Fiber Composites Market Analysis Report, 2016). The ASEAN region comes out as the most significant growth area for the composites industry and is expected to gain a total market share of about 50% by volume in 2020 (Plastic & Composites Sector Report, 2017).

Natural fibers can be defined as fibers derived from plants or animals. Natural fibers can come from a large variety of fiber sources such as bast fibers, seed fibers, leaf fibers, grass and reed fibers and core fibers. The advantages of using

natural fiber composites are that they are biodegradable, renewable, recyclable, abundant, low cost, density and weight, less polluted during production. These would result in minimal hazards and eco-friendly nature. Natural fiber composites also have a short life when it comes to degradation with limited environmental damage whereas synthetic fibers have a negative impact due to pollution from slow degradation. Besides that, the total CO₂ releases by the natural fibers when they are decomposed or combusted at the end of their life cycle is the same as that absorbed during their growth (Bledzki & Gassan, 1999).

Natural fibers crop are mostly considered as environmentally friendly when compared with synthetic fibers due to many reasons. As example, the plant cultivation sequestrated of much CO₂ from the atmosphere. They also consume less energy than the production of synthetic polymers and fibers. Natural fibers products manufactured from renewable resources which differ from the production of synthetic fibers that lead to depletion of natural resources. The usage of artificial fertilizers and pesticides will result in emission of greenhouse gasses in some processing stages (Carus et al, 2014; and Rana et al, 2014).

In recent years to satisfy the natural fiber demand for the composites, kenaf has grown in importance. This resulted in the establishment of kenaf as a fiber crop around the world (Zheng & Yu (2002), Anandjiwala & Blouw (2007)). Among the many types of natural fibers such as jute, hemp, sisal, and coir, kenaf plants have been widely been used around the world due to its rapid growth over a wide range of climatic conditions and its low indirect cost (Qatu, 2011). Kenaf belongs to the hibiscus family *Malvacea*. Globally, kenaf has been considered as a suitable biological resource and a potential substitute for fossil fuels and wood palm due to its properties of strong resistance, large biomass, great adaptation and rich cellulose.

Due to the excellent mechanical properties and abundant local supply and relatively cheaper cost of kenaf fiber (RM4.00/kg) as compared to glass fibers (RM7.00/kg), it is anticipated to be a perfect choice for composite products primarily for automotive applications (Izran K et al., 2014). There were several research endeavours on the advantages of using kenaf fiber composites in automotive applications. Hassan et al (2017) found that even though glass fiber is more dominant in properties related to strength, modulus (GPa) and elongation at break compared to kenaf fiber, but the latter fiber has some advantages over glass fiber concerning cost, density, renewability, recyclability, abrasiveness, and biodegradability.

1.3 Problem Statement

Currently, policies on vehicle manufacturing are aimed to make the use of any natural fiber in automobile part a must in the legislations, crash-worthiness, safety and light weighting of the vehicle as well as the global green issues for automotive manufacturing (Aminah A, 2003). The mechanical properties, thermal properties, recyclability of the environmental materials must be considered in each product. This is aligned with the European Union (EU) environmental rules and recyclability illustrate that the total body of manufactured vehicle must contains reusable or recoverable part at least 95% of total weight (Bonnia et al, 2010).

As the automotive industry develops, its impact to the environment also increases. Average range of vehicles life is considered between 10 and 15 years, after that they will enter the retired phase. The issues are how to deal with the wastes from retired vehicles and how to get economic and environmental advantage from it. In 2006, Malaysia produced around 1,103,457 metric tons of hazardous waste. The Department of Environment has identified 77 categories of scheduled waste, which is primarily causes by automotive besides the chemical, workshop, petrochemical, metal and pharmaceutical industries (Amelia et al, 2009). Even if the local automotive has not established confident using kenaf as their material in automotive parts, the economic benefits from utilization kenaf fiber composites should motivate the local automotive manufacturer.

Ever since the uprising of the green movement and awareness of the effect of greenhouse gases, consumers all over the world have become conscious about the product they use. Green concept has been spreading especially among the developed nations and is picking up in the developing and less developed countries. Thus, awareness and concern about environment degradation, food safety, animal welfare and sustainable development has created green consumerism among the consuming population in Malaysia as well (Golnaz R. et al, 2013). In 2008, green consumers globally had an estimated annual buying power of US \$500 billion (Berry, 2007), and they are willing to pay a price premium for environment-friendly products stemming from the growing global environmental consumerism (Shukri & Muhamad, 2007).

As composites edge towards the higher performance applications, designers are faced with a wider range of materials from which to choose. Costs are an important consideration in the effort to produce affordable personal transportation. However, perhaps the primary driver for the use of lighter weight materials today is to lower emissions. It would, therefore, be prudent to also evaluate the environmental performance of a candidate material in addition to its cost. Reductions in environmental burdens from one phase of a vehicle's life cycle may result in increases in other areas which could negate initial benefits. It is precisely these shifts of environmental burdens which need to be understood, thus ensuring materials are selected on their ability to improve

complete environmental performance, rather than focusing on one life cycle phase.

Thus, by highlighting the potential value and demand of the kenaf industry, this could raise awareness and further attract kenaf investors and entrepreneurs to drive the industry forward. For this purpose, an assessment on the environmental and economic sustainability of kenaf fibers is necessary. Does kenaf fiber reinforced composite applied in automobile environmentally less polluting all along its life cycle? Further would using kenaf fiber reinforced composites in automotive add value to the consumers and how much would consumers be willing to pay for a more environmentally automotive component. Incorporating kenaf fiber reinforced composite into applications for the automotive segments could be technically feasible but is this move economically feasible too? These are several practical questions that various stakeholders, be they be researchers, car manufacturers and buyers would like to know.

1.4 Research Question

The main purpose of this study is to assess the environmental and economic sustainability of kenaf fiber as bio-materials in the Malaysian Automotive Industry. To achieve this, the study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What are the environmental impact potentials of applying kenaf fiber reinforced composites in automotive components?
- 2) How much would car consumers value or be willing to pay for the application of kenaf fiber reinforced composite in automotive components?
- 3) How financially and economically feasible be the application of kenaf fiber reinforced composites in automotive components?

1.5 Research Objective

This study aims to conduct an environmental and economic impact of Kenaf bio-materials into automotive industry in Malaysia, and the objectives are as follow:

- 1) To assess the environmental impact of applying kenaf fiber reinforced composites in automotive components
- 2) To identify the economic value of customer preferences on buying a kenaf fiber reinforced composite automotive components.
- 3) To conduct the financial and economic feasibility on applying kenaf fiber reinforced composites in automotive components.

This thesis addresses this challenge by increasing the understanding of the potential use of kenaf fiber reinforced composite in automotive components for

the car Industry. A positive outcome in terms of environmental and economic feasibility, would go a long way in convincing the investor and potential industry in Malaysia, especially automotive industry to use Kenaf fiber as their material

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to attract more manufacturing industries to invest into kenaf cultivation and value adding processing, especially in the automotive industry. With a greater understanding of the environmental and economic issues and the roles played by relevant stakeholders such planters, fiber processors, automobile manufacturers and car buyers, the possibilities to ensure the kenaf industry develop and be successful would make this investigation an essential instrument to helping the Government in resolving the issues on the way forward for the kenaf industry in Malaysia. Automobile manufacturers need information and have to be convinced that the use of eco-friendly bio-materials is not only environmentally sustainable but also contribute to their income streams. Besides that, understanding consumers preferences for eco-friendly products may play an important role in formulating environmental policy changes to face complex problems as diverse as environmental pollution or global change.

1.7 Scope of the Study

Spare wheel cover has been chosen as an automotive component in this study. The reason why the spare wheel cover has been chosen as an automotive component in this study is because the spare wheel cover has a simple design and material suitability compared with another car component. The production of spare wheel cover will be used as a basis for this study from the upstream into the downstream phase. This included the inclusion of kenaf fiber and kenaf fiber composites in each phase.

1.8 Definition of the Key Terms

There are several main operational definitions used throughout this research. They are defined according to popular definitions used by earlier researchers. The detailed definitions are summarized in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Operational Definition

No.	Construct	Operational Definitions
1	Sustainability	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
2	Sustainable Manufacturing	Defined as a creation of manufactured products which use processes that minimize negative environmental impacts, conserve energy and natural resources, safe for the consumers and are economically sound
3	Environmental Assessment	Defined as identifying, estimating, and evaluating the environmental impacts of existing and proposed projects, by conducting environmental studies, to mitigate the relevant negative effects prior to making decisions and commitments.
4	Bio-composite	Defined as a material formed a combination of resin and natural fiber
5	Green Marketing	to satisfy consumers' wants, needs and desires as well as to preserve the natural environment and benefits to society in a more sustainable way
6	Economic Valuation	a tool to define and measure the value based on the individual preferences and choices.
7	Green Product	one that has less of an environmental impact or is less detrimental to human health than the traditional product equivalent.

Note: Compiled by Author

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis will be divided into five chapters namely; introduction, literature review, research methodology, result and discussion, conclusion and recommendation for future research.

Chapter One has discussed the background of natural fibers and the potential of utilization Kenaf fibers as automotive components in Malaysia Automotive Industry. It also highlights the problem statement, objective and the justification of this study.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature on Kenaf industry in Malaysia, especially in cultivation, processing, and manufacturing. It will highlight previous research efforts on the characteristics and potential of Kenaf.

Chapter Three discusses matters about the use of various methodologies such as life cycle analysis, contingent valuation method and cost-benefit analysis as a methodology in the study.

Chapter Four focusses on the research methodology that will be used in this study in line with the primary objectives set in chapter one. This chapter also discusses how and where the data are collected and explains the procedures involved in handling the data for analysis by using appropriate analytical models.

In **Chapter Five**, the result from the life cycle assessment, contingent valuation method and cost-benefit analysis will be analysed in detail.

Chapter Six provide a detailed discussion that obtained from Chapter Five

Finally, **Chapter Seven** provides the summary and conclusions of findings concerning the impacts of utilization kenaf fiber in Malaysian Automotive Industry. Policy implications, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research would also be the highlighted here.

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