

Analyzing Psychographic Factors Affecting Green Purchase Intention

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ABSTRACT

Along with Businesses, consumers also play a vital role in promoting green revolution in any country by conscious environmentally responsible purchase decisions. And thus, understanding the consumer behavior towards environmentally safe products is important for enterprises. Studies have identified different psychographic factors that can be considered as predictors of environmentally responsible behavior. This paper tries to build a comprehensive regression model considering psychographic factors such as Environmental Attitude, Environmental Concern, Collectivism, Subjective Norms, Perceived consumer effectiveness, Self-transcendence and Self-enhancement as predictors of Green Purchase Intentions of consumers. A survey of 244 students of different graduation and Post-graduation courses of a private university of India was conducted to collect the data. The correlation and regression model identified Environmental Attitude, Environmental Concern, Subjective Norms, and Perceived consumer effectiveness as strong predictors of Green Purchase Intention.

Introduction

As the environment continues to worsen, it has become a persistent public concern in the developed countries and has recently awakened developing countries to the green movement (Chen & Chai, 2010). Also, because individual behavior is considered as the main cause of environmental degradation, the role of personal consumption is gaining concern to check the deterioration of our environment. About 30 -40 % environmental degradation has been brought about by the consumption activities of the households. Thus, by modifying their consumption behavior, consumers can contribute to environment protection.

As recognized by many researchers, consumers play a vital role in sustainable development as consumers' preferences and demands are in a key position when producers consider whether it is worthwhile investing in environment-friendly products and production. Also, consumers' own choices and lifestyles have a direct impact on the environment. With increasing consumption level particularly among the developing nations like India, the behavior of the consumers will play a crucial role for the consumer himself basing his or her acquisition, usage, and disposition of products on a desire to minimize or eliminate any harmful effects and maximize the long-term beneficial impact on society (Mohr et al., 2004).

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If consumers display environmental concern and reflect it into their consumption behavior, marketers will be motivated to practice green marketing without compromising the profitability. One type of environmentally conscious behavior is environmental consumerism (green buying), that is, purchasing and consuming products that are benign towards the environment (Juwaheer, 2005)

No matter what reason enterprises have in pursuing environmental marketing, they are going face to face with the consciousness of the consumer. Hence, enterprises must focus their activities to target the variety of consumer preferences. Accurate understanding of the characteristics that describe these green consumers will aid green marketers in positioning themselves into the 21st century. (Straughan & Roberts, 1999). In this context, understanding the environmentally conscious consumer's behavior is important for enterprises (Duygu, 2009).

Webster (1975) used the term socially conscious consumers; are those who take into account the societal and environmental consequences in purchasing products. Environmentally responsible buying can be considered as a specific type of socially conscious behavior (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972) because the behavior (e.g., buying and consuming green products) reflects a conscious concern for the environmental consequences related to the consumption of particular products or services. Consumers who take into account the ecological consequences (including people and nature) of their private consumptions would be more favorable toward the environment and the use of green products compared to the others who do not care about them.

Many studies have been conducted to understand environmentally conscious consumer's behavior (Chen & Chai, 2010; Duygu, 2009; KIM, 2011; Straughan & Roberts, 1999; Ubba & Kumar; 2010). Various psychological construct have been considered as factors affecting green consumer behavior i.e. affect, knowledge, Attitudes, Lifestyles, Values, but their exact relationship with such behavior is still unclear. Further, the focus of this large number of studies have been more on developed countries consumers (Seyed Saleki & Seyed Saleki, 2012)

Thus, this study is carried out to identify a comprehensive relationship between different psychological construct [Perceived consumer Effectiveness, Environmental Concern (Straughan & Roberts, 1999), collectivism (McCarty & Shrum, 2001), values such as Self-transcendence and self-enhancement (Stern et al. 1999), Subjective Norms (Ajzen, 1991)] and green purchase intention.

The research builds a regression model considering Green Purchase Intention as dependent variable and psychological construct such as Environmental Attitude, Environmental Concern, Collectivism, Subjective Norms, Perceived consumer effectiveness, Self-transcendence and Self-enhancement as independent variable. The data for the research was collected from 244 students of different graduation and Post-graduation courses at a private university of India. The relationship between the constructs was studied using software package SPSS 17.0. The result identified Environmental Attitude, Environmental Concern, Subjective Norms, Perceived consumer effectiveness as strong predictors of Green Purchase of Intention.

Literature Review

Ottman (1993) described green consumers as people who searched for and support products that fulfill their requirements, and that have less influence on the environment. Webster (1975) used the term socially conscious consumers for those who take into account the societal and environmental consequences in purchasing products. Environmentally responsible buying can be considered as a specific type of socially conscious behavior (Anderson and Cunningham 1972) because the behavior (e.g., buying and consuming green products) reflects a conscious concern for the environmental consequences related to the consumption of particular products or services.

Further, it is found that psychographic variables are better predictors of Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviors (ECCB) as compared to demographic factors (Straughan & Roberts, 1999). (Duygu, 2009). Various psychological constructs have been considered as factors affecting green consumer behavior i.e. affects, knowledge, Attitudes, Lifestyles, and Values. Researchers have identified Perceived consumer Effectiveness, Environmental Concern (Straughan & Roberts, 1999), collectivism (McCarty & Shrum, 2001), values such as Self-transcendence and self-enhancement (Stern et al. 1999), Subjective Norms (Ajzen, 1991) factors affecting green behavior of consumers.

Following is the reviewed literature on the different psychological factors considered in the study as predictors of Green Purchase Intention.

Collectivism

Research on individual environmentalism has paid considerable attention to individual values as

consumer personal values are considered crucial for his/her commitments to the environment. Value is defined as a belief about desirable end states and consumers with different value systems will show different behaviors because one's values, such as important life goals or standards, are guiding principles in one's life (Rokeach, 1973). In general, people from individualistic cultures are more independent and self-oriented, whereas those from collectivistic cultures tend to be interdependent and group-oriented

As suggested by McCarty & Shrum (2001) value of Individualism and collectivism, serving fundamental beliefs about people's relationships and interactions with others, might have influences on individuals' environmental behaviors. Also, McCarty and Shrum (1994) found that collectivistic persons are more likely to engage in recycling behaviors. The characteristics of collectivism which emphasizes the goals of the group and conformity may suggest its positive relationship with environmentally responsible behaviors because more collectivistic people tend to be more concerned with the impact of their action on the society. In this study, collectivism covers priority of group goals, importance of harmony with nature and unity with others.

Environmental Attitude

Attitudes are also one of the explanatory factors in predicting consumers' willingness to pay for green products (Chyong et al., 2006). In existing literature, environmental attitude is described as a cognitive judgment towards the value of environmental protection. Attitude represents what consumers like and dislike (Blackwell et al., 2006) and consumers' product purchasing decisions are often based on their environmental attitudes (Schwepker and Cornwell, 1991).

However, Contrasting results have been found between environmental attitude and behavior (Chen & Chai , 2010) ; Lee, 2009), which suggests that consumers' attitudes on the green products are not facilitated by the positive attitudes of consumers towards environmental protection and further studies are needed to confirm the relationship between environmental attitude and behavior. A 4-item scale was adopted from the study of Lee (2009) for this study.

Environmental concern

Environmental concern refers to an affective attribute that can represent a person's worries, compassion, likes and dislikes about the environment (Yeung, 2005). According to Werner & Alvensleben (2011) and Vadivelu & R. (2013), there is a relationship between the amount of consumers' environmental concern, and their motivation to buy products that are organic. Bang et al. (2000) found that more environmentally concerned consumers expressed more willingness to pay more for renewable energy than those who were less concerned about the environment. Four items scale was adopted from Lee (2009) to measure the consumers' degree of environmental concern.

Perceived Consumer Effectiveness

An environmental attitude, although it is important, is not sufficient for environmental action to occur. For example, even individuals with favorable attitudes may engage in environmental behaviors less frequently because they believe their individual efforts are less effective in solving the problem (KIM, 2011). Perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) which is defined as "the

evaluation of the self in the context of the issue" (Berger and Corbin, 1992) has received a great deal of attention as an important predictor of environmentally conscious consumer behaviors (Ellen, Wiener, and Cobb-Walgren 1991; Kinnear, Taylor, and Ahmed 1974). PCE is found to predict importantly environmentally conscious consumer behavior (Roberts 1996; Straughan and Roberts 1999: (KIM, 2011) ; Samdahl & Robertson, 1989); Duygu, 2009)). A 3 item scale was adopted as used by KIM (2011) for this study.

Subjective Norms

Subjective norm reflects one's perceived social pressure to perform a certain behavior. Bahn & Wright (2001) defined Social norms as "perceptions about the nature and context of prevailing social sentiments". Social Norms have been proved to influence the buying behavior of people (Ajzen, 1991). Kim & Chung (2011) in their study found that iff consumers believe that significant others think organic skin care products are good, consumers will have more intention to buy these products.

Self-transcendence & Self-Enhancement

Self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement, have been importantly examined in explaining people's differential commitments to the environment (Stern et al.1999) ; (KIM, 2011). Self-transcendence values, representing socio-altruistic motives, are positively related to environmental-friendly attitudes and behaviors, but that self-enhancement values close to egoistic motives are negatively or insignificantly related to them (Kim, Choi, & Rifon, 2009) . A scale used by KIM (2011) is used to measure these personal values of respondents.

From the literature review following conceptual model has been developed as shown in the figure 1 and Objective of this Research study is to test the conceptual model and see how the independent factors identified by Literature Review, affect the Green Purchase Intention of Consumers. Research design and testing of the model is illustrated in the next section of the paper.

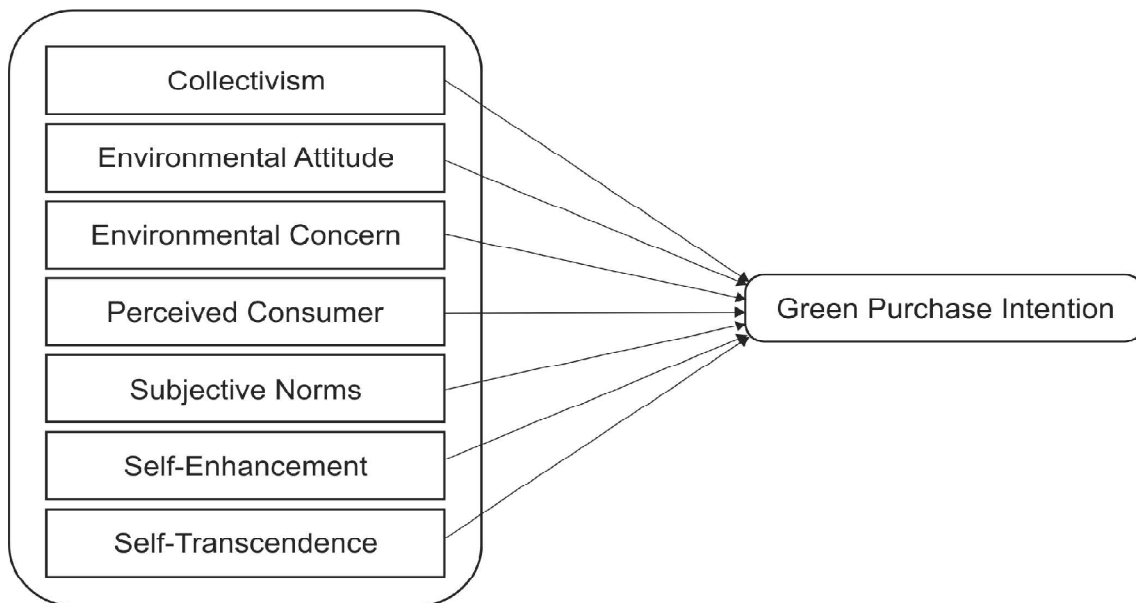


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Research Design

From the reviewed literature, Collectivism, Environmental Attitudes, Perceived Environmental Effectiveness (PCE), Subjective Norms, Environmental Concern, Self-Enhancement and Self-Transcendence as psychographic factors affecting green purchase behavior. To identify how these factors affect the dependent variable, correlation and Regression Analysis was conducted.

Sample design and Data collection

For this purpose, survey was carried out among Graduate and Post-graduate Students of a private university of India. Total 244 Questionnaire were found complete and valid for data analysis. The students were given and explained the questionnaire in the classroom by the researcher personally. Thus, the sampling method adopted is convenience sampling Table I shows the sample profile.

Table 1: Sample Profile

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	152	62.3
Female	92	37.7
Total	244	100.0
Graduation	Frequency	Percent
Commerce	8	3.3
Management	31	12.7
Science/Computer	148	60.7
Engineering/Pharmacy	57	23.4
Total	244	100.0
Family size	Frequency	Percent
1 to 2	7	2.9
3 to 4	156	63.9
5 to 6	64	26.2
more than 6	17	7.0
Total	244	100.0

(Source : Primary Data)

The questionnaire consisted for two sections i.e. one section to collect demographic information of the respondent such as Gender, Family Income, Family Size and course. While, the second section consisted of the statements pertaining to scales adopted for measuring independent variable (Green Purchase Intention) and psychographic factors (Collectivism, Environmental Attitudes, Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE), Subjective Norms, Environmental Concern, Self-Enhancement and Self-Transcendence). The respondents were asked to show their agreement level on a five-point Likert Scale (5- Strongly Agree to 1- Strongly Disagree).

Cronbach's Alpha for the various scales used is shown below as a measure of Reliability. Cronbach's Alpha for all construct is > .6, which indicates that all the scales adopted for the study are reliable.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
Green Purchase Intention (GPI)	.769	5
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE)	.634	3
Subjective Norms (SN)	.681	3
Environmental Attitude (EA)	.680	3
Environmental Concern (EC)	.611	4
Collectivism (COLLECT)	.603	2
Self transcendence (SELF-TRANCE)	.740	4
Self Enhancement (SELF-ENHANCE)	.694	3

The data were analyzed using SPSS 17.0, a software package widely used for data analysis purpose. To identify how these factors affect the dependent variable, correlation and Regression Analysis was conducted. Correlation between Green Purchase Intention and psychographic factors was found out using Pearson Correlation Coefficient. Next, the Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted and results were interpreted to find out predictors of Green Purchase Intention.

Data Analysis

To measure the relationship between Green Purchase Intention (GPI) and psychographic factors, Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis were conducted. In the first stage, basic correlations were examined regarding each of the psychographic variables Green Purchase intention. The second stage of the analysis, multiple regression analysis was carried out with Green Purchase Intention modeled as the dependent variable, and psychographic variables serving as independent variables.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was used to check whether Green Purchase Intention is significantly correlated with psychographic construct or not. Table II shows the result of Correlation analysis.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

		ET	EC	COLLECT	NORMS	PCE	SELF_ TRANCE	SELF_ ENHANCE
GPI	Pearson Correlation	.174**	.384**	.328**	.424**	.479**	.298**	.156*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.015
	N	244	244	244	244	244	244	244

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

GPI = Green Purchase Intention, ET = Environmental Attitude, EC = Environmental Concern COLLECT = Collectivism PCE = Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, SN = Subjective Norms, SELF_ TRANCE = Self-Enhancement, SELF_ ENHANCE = Self-Transcendence

(Source : SPSS Output File)

As it can be seen, all the psychographic factors are significantly positively correlated with Green Purchase Intention of the consumers (p-value for all factors are < .05). Further, PCE (0, .479), NORMS (0, .424), and EC (0, .384) are more strongly correlated with GPI as compared to other factors i.e. COLLECT (0, .328), SELF-TRANCE (0, .298), ET (0, .174) and SEL-ENHANCE (0, .156). Thus, it can be said that consumers Green Purchase Intentions are strongly correlated with consumer perception that they can contribute to environment protection by their conscious purchase decisions, influence of reference groups and society and individual's concern for environment.

Regression Analysis

To check which psychographic factors can be considered as important predictors of green purchase behavior, Regression Analysis was conducted with GPI (Green Purchase Intention) as dependent variable and psychographic factors such as Collectivism, Environmental Attitudes, Perceived Environmental Effectiveness, Subjective Norms, Environmental Concern, Self-Enhancement and Self-Transcendence as independent variables.

The model containing all seven factors was significant, $R^2 = 0.317$, $F(7, 235) = 15.575$, $p < 0.001$. All predictors were significant except Collectivism and Self-Enhancement. From R^2 value it can be said that the model explains 31.7% variance in the dependent variable. All VIF values are < 10 and tolerance values are $> .1$, thus there is no problem of multicollinearity. The result of the regression analysis is shown in the Table III.

The predictability of the variables was in the following descending order: Perceived Consumer Effectiveness ($\hat{\alpha} = .253$, $p < 0.001$), Environmental Concern ($\hat{\alpha} = .170$, $p < 0.05$), Subjective Norms ($\hat{\alpha} = .167$, $p < 0.05$), Environmental Attitude ($\hat{\alpha} = .141$, $p < 0.05$), Self-Transcendence ($\hat{\alpha} = .116$, $p < 0.1$). The model suggests that Collectivism and Self-Enhancement does not affect Green Purchase Intention significantly.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.905	.369		2.455	.015					
ET*	.095	.037	.141	2.569	.011	.174	.165	.139	.964	1.037
EC*	.171	.065	.170	2.627	.009	.384	.169	.142	.690	1.449
COLLECT	.005	.070	.005	.075	.941	.328	.005	.004	.647	1.545
NORMS*	.162	.070	.167	2.312	.022	.424	.149	.125	.554	1.806
PCE**	.263	.075	.253	3.533	.000	.479	.225	.190	.566	1.768
SELF_TRANCE***	.124	.066	.116	1.882	.061	.298	.122	.101	.770	1.299
SELF_ENHANCE	-.009	.050	-.010	-1.176	.861	.156	-.011	-.009	.830	1.205

a. Dependent Variable : GPI

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .1$

GPI = Green Purchase Intention, ET = Environmental Attitude, EC = Environmental Concern COLLECT = Collectivism PCE = Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, SN = Subjective Norms, SELF_TRANCE = Self-Enhancement, SELF_ENHANCE = Self-Transcendence

(Source : SPSS Output File)

Discussion and Implications

From the correlation analysis it can be concluded that all psychographic variable considered in the model are significantly correlated with purchase behavior of Green products. Specifically, PCE (0, .479), NORMS (0, .424), and EC (0, .384) are more strongly correlated with GPI. That is, consumers Green Purchase Intentions are strongly correlated with consumer perception that they can contribute to environment protection by their conscious purchase decisions, influence of reference groups and society and individual's concern for environment. Individual Values of Self-Transcendence and Self-Enhancement has weak correlation with purchase intentions. The regression analysis confirmed the relation between psychographic factors and purchase intention of the consumers for green products. Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE), Subjective Norms (SN) and Environmental Concern (EC) are the most significant predictors of consumer's purchase behavior. This is also consistent with the findings of (Straughan & Roberts, 1999), (Kim & Chung, 2011) and (Duygu, 2009). Collectivism and Self-Enhancement does not show significant relationship with purchase intention.

Consumers' self-belief of their effectiveness in contributing toward environment protection is one of the important factors affecting consumers' decision to purchase environmentally safe products. Those who believe their actions and decision could reduce environment degradation are more likely to engage in environmentally responsible behavior. Another factor identified by the study is consumers' concern for the environmental issues. Consumers who are worried about deteriorating environment quality

and conscious about environmental issues are the one who will consider buying ecologically safe products. Also, influence of family and other reference groups is found to have significant effect on green purchase intentions of consumers.

Implication for green marketers is to appeal to environmentally concerned consumers in all their communications. Those who show their concern about environmental issue through their opinions and activities should be targeted by marketers. Also, because Perceived Consumer effectiveness affects Green Purchase intentions, marketers should educate consumers how they could contribute to environment protection through their environmental conscious purchase behavior. This can be achieved by marketing communication programs aimed at explaining consumers their role and responsibility in environment protection. Influence of family and other reference groups should not be neglected as Subjective Norms have been found to have strong predictive power in explaining Green Purchase Intentions. Green marketers can identify opinion leaders and reference groups so as to stimulate environmentally conscious behaviors of consumers.

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