



Impact of culture, behavior and gender on green purchase intention

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Green Purchase Intention
Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)
Long-Term Orientation (LTO)
Collectivism
Man-nature orientation

ABSTRACT

Green purchase can have an impact on organization bottom line. It also helps to build a positive public image, brand, and goodwill in the marketplace. The purchasing intention for the green products varies across culture, gender and individual behavior of a person.

This paper examines the impact of individual behavior on green purchase intention by applying constructs from Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). A conceptual model is developed in this research by linking cultural values from Hofstede dimensions and value orientation model by Kluchhohn and Strodbeck (1961) to determinants of green purchase intention. The paper also examines the role played by gender on purchase intention through culture and behavior. Collectivism and Long-term orientation (LTO) dimensions are included from Hofstede and Man-nature orientation is included from Kluchhohn and Strodbeck (1961) model.

The findings of the study suggest that collectivism is significantly related to all three predictors (attitude, subjective norms and Internal PBC) of green purchase intention in TPB whereas LTO is insignificantly related to attitude towards green products while examining the direct effects. Green purchase intention is also significantly related to Man-nature orientation.

The research shows the path to translate cultural values, norms, and beliefs of an individual into purchase intention. Therefore, the research provides an insight to practitioners and policy-makers on how to increase intention towards green products.

The study concludes that the awareness level regarding green products among individuals in India is still a matter of concern and therefore, practitioners and policymakers need to take efforts to make them knowledgeable about the same.

1. Introduction

India in the past two decades has achieved phenomenal economic growth by institutionalizing an open trade policy and improving its financial market development (Agrawal, 2015). The rapid economic growth in India has come up with several unwelcomed consequences. There has been a rise in air and water pollution that has affected the infant mortality rates and life expectancy rates (Striessing et al., 2013).

The recent surveys predict India to be the most populous country in the world by 2050 (Population Reference Bureau (PRB), 2001). India is one-third the size of China and with such growth in population, India may suffer shortages such as water scarcity and land shortage. Such shortages will cause further environmental degradation such as deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution. Population growth and economic development have led to environmental calamities in India.

As a result, businesses and consumers have now realized the need to protect the natural resources and there have been changes in the production and consumption patterns of business and consumers.

Consumers are now more sensitive towards social and ethical considerations of organizations (Chen, 2001). Consumers see companies today not only as profit centres but also as establishments sensible to social problems. Therefore, organizations have started focusing on 'Sustainability' as a business goal by adopting green marketing strategies to promote the purchase of green products to existing and potential consumers. Green products are products that strive to protect the natural environment by using energy conservative resources and reducing the use of toxic agents, pollution, and waste (Ottman, 1992). Previous research has shown that individuals who are more concerned about the environment are more likely to purchase green products (Sarumathi, 2014). This trend is referred to as green consumption (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972), the assumption behind this trend is that purchasing choices express not only price and quality preferences (Monroe, 1976) but also norms, values, and beliefs (Caruana, 2007).

There is limited availability of literature in Indian context regarding green consumption behavior. Maheshwari (2014) argues that there is a lack of knowledge and awareness regarding the green products in India.

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Dupont green living survey (2014) supports her claim by showing that awareness level regarding green products in India (63%) is much lower than that of developed countries such as Canada (78%) and USA (73%). Low awareness levels can be attributed to organizations not developing green products for the Indian market (Green Purchasing Network of India, 2014). The awareness levels can be improved by educating customers and building better products (Bonini and Oppenheim, 2008). Singh and Bansal (2012) suggested that more knowledge regarding green products will help build better attitudes towards green products.

It has been discussed that Indian consumers are concerned about the degradation of the environment (Dupont green living survey, 2014) and feel guilty about the impact they have on the environment (Greendex Survey, 2012). Saxena and Khandelwal (2010) argued that high concern of people regarding environmental issues and willingness of people to buy green products should encourage organizations to produce more green products. However, having a concern about the environment does not always translate into purchase behavior (Akehurst et al., 2012). In India, in spite of environmental concern shown by the people, green consumption has not taken off and therefore, it has become important to analyse variables that may impact purchase intention of Indian consumers regarding green products.

In the past, the socio-demographic factors such as age, income, gender, and location were the main parameters used to explain consumer green preferences (Straughan and Roberts, 1999). But various demographic studies showed different results and hence were considered of limited value in profiling green consumers (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003). At the end, it was argued that these socio-demographic factors act as moderators and not as determinants of consumer green preference (Peattie, 2010).

Barber et al. (2010) suggests that researchers should investigate consumers' attitude, sustainability practices and purchase intentions for green products. Various attitude models have been developed that may help to investigate attitude and purchase intentions for green products. The focus of this paper is to use one such attitude model i.e. Theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) to explain the purchase intention of green products. Theory of planned behavior has four constructs that explain the purchase behavior: a. Attitude towards the product, b. Subjective norms, c. Perceived behavioral control (PBC) and d. Purchase intention (Ajzen, 1991). Most studies in Indian context found that an extension of TPB explains more variance for green purchase intention than TPB (Paul et al., 2015; Rambalak Yadav et al., 2017), therefore, they used the extension of TPB in their research. Paul et al., 2015 studied the impact of environmental concern on attitude towards green products, subjective norms, PBC and intention to use green products. Ramablak Yadav et al. (2017) studied the impact of TPB predictor constructs (attitude, subjective norms, PBC) on intention to use green products, they extended the TPB model by also studying the impact of willingness to pay a premium and perceived value on intention to use green products. One way to analyse consumer green preference may be to understand values that consumers' possess. Values may be stated as desired end-states that guide action and behavior of individuals' towards specific objects and can actually serve as criteria for testing the actions that people make (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987) via determinants such as beliefs, attitudes, and norms (Steg and De Groot, 2012). However, till now there has been no clear consensus on the interrelationship between green purchase intention and value (Tilikidou and Delistavrou, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2017) and relationship varies across different cultures (Soyez, 2012).

Culture is an important dimension to explain consumer behavior and has been used in previous studies to explain consumer purchase behavior for green products mostly in the developed market (Joreiman et al., 2004; Sarigöllü, 2009). Culture has been defined as a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others (Hofstede, 1980). To the best of our knowledge no literature in Indian context has created a path from cultural values to predictor TPB constructs and from predictor TPB constructs to intention

to use green products. This research intends to cover this gap by creating the path from cultural dimensions to predictor TPB constructs and then to intention to use green products in an Indian context.

Dimensional models are of great use to understand the operations of the culture (Marieke De Mooij, 2013). Hofstede dimensions have been extensively used to understand the purchase intention of consumers across cultures. Studies done on consumer purchase intention has included five dimensions namely power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and long-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001). However, amongst these five dimensions, Collectivism and long-term orientation (LTO) are the most accepted dimensions for determining green purchase intention (Leonidou et al., 2010; Cho et al., 2013). Most of the previous studies have ignored the use of framework developed by Kluchhohn and Strodbeck (1961) which was amongst the first frameworks to discuss value orientations for understanding culture theory. Cultural values have been categorized into five orientations as per the framework namely relationship orientation, man-nature orientation, man-himself orientation, past-time orientation and personal-activity orientation (Kluchhohn and Strodbeck, 1961).

This research includes Hofstede dimensions and value orientation model by Kluchhohn and Strodbeck (1961). As the focus of this study is on green purchase behavior, collectivism and long-term orientation dimensions is applied from Hofstede dimensions and Man-nature orientation is applied from Kluchhohn and Strodbeck (1961) model to determine the impact of cultural values on green purchase intention. Man-nature orientation states that a man should live in harmony with nature and not try to master it. Chan (2001) included this dimension to understand green purchase behavior of Chinese consumers. In an Indian context, authors did not find any literature that checked the impact of man-nature orientation on environmentally friendly products in India. In India, there seems to be a high man-nature orientation since Indians worship different forms of nature such as mountains, animals, and rivers. Previous research has not focused on this orientation which is likely to impact purchasing intention in India and might showcase a better picture to marketers regarding the behavior of individuals.

India is a heterogeneous country and consists of various subcultures that have their separate values, beliefs, and norms. Therefore, performing a study of cultural orientations on a national level as done in most of the developed countries (Soyez, 2012; Boeve-de Pauw and Van Petegem, 2013) may be of limited value. Knowing individual tendencies may provide a better picture to marketers for the question regarding the green purchase intention of the consumers. Therefore, this study examines individual behavior contrary to previous studies that have been mostly focused on examining national behavior.

As discussed earlier socio-demographic constructs may be used as moderating variables in profiling green consumers. Amongst the various socio-demographic constructs, issues related to gender have received limited attention in case of environmental studies (Zelezny et al., 2000) especially in an emerging market scenario (Lee, 2009). Therefore, to cover this gap authors take gender as a moderating variable to understand differences between gender perceptions towards green purchase intention. This is the first study in an Indian context that includes the impact of variables such as Collectivism, Long-term orientation, Gender and Man-Nature orientation and understand their impact on the green purchase intention of the consumers by linking these variables with TPB predictor constructs (attitude, subjective norms and PBC).

Moreover, the research also provides insights regarding an emerging market such as India. Besides, theoretical contribution it may also assist policymakers and practitioners in promoting pro-environmental behavior.

2. Review of literature & hypothesis development

2.1. Theory of planned behavior

Theory of planned behavior (TPB) has been confirmed to be superior than other psychological models to predict human behavior that

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