

Green Products: A Systematic Review on Factors Influencing Purchase Behaviour of Customers

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Abstract

Unsustainable level of utilisation of products and services in the last decade lead to serious sustainability issues such as atmospheric conditions, increased contamination in the environment, therefore it becomes necessary to purchase those products which are safe for the environment. This study helps is exploring the factors influencing the behaviour of customers towards the purchase of green products. For the purpose of this study 77 articles and research papers related to the topic were reviewed from the time period of 2000-2018. Study identified several drivers and barriers influencing customers' decision to purchase green products and gives reasonable justification for the attitude-behaviour inconsistencies. Some driving factors such as customer's environmental concern, environmental awareness and product functional attributes appeared as significant determining factor of green purchase behaviour. Therefore, the identification of various factors will be useful for the marketers and policy makers in formulating those strategies that will motivate green purchasing.

Keywords: Green products, Green Purchasing, Attitude-Behaviour Gap

1. Introduction

Unsustainable level of utilisation of products and services in the last decade leads to serious environmental sustainability issues such as atmospheric conditions, increased contamination in the environment and decrease in plant and animal species (Chen and chai, 2010). In developing economies, sustainability problems are on the rise and customers are becoming conscious about environment- related problems (Khare, 2014). While exploring behaviour of customers towards green products, many studies found a "gap" between customers positive view point towards such products and actual purchasing behaviour (Moser, 2015; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2008; Tanner and Kast, 2003). Although customers have positive attitude towards green products but in several cases their positive attitude did not shift into actual purchase behaviour. It becomes necessary to identify why customer's favourable attitude do not convert into actual purchase for green products and what factors determine the behaviour of customers towards the purchase of such products.

The current study analyse the accessible empirical studies related green purchase behaviour and try to recognize the issues affecting purchase behaviour of customers towards green products.

2. Literature Review

The procurement of products which are eco-friendly refers to green purchasing (Chan, 2001). The purchase of such products is usually studied as green purchase intention and behaviour. Green purchase intention or willingness defined as customers' readiness to

procure such products which will protect environment and their willingness holds reason regarding the purchase of green products (Chan, 2001; Lee, 2010). Green purchase behaviour can be described as the procurement of green products termed as 'recyclable' and 'favourable' foreco-system or not buying those products having adverse effect on humanity (Chan, 2001). In general, green products usually includes reusable products, organic food, organic personal care products, and other FMCG products etc.(Lee, 2008; Jaiswal and Kant, 2017).Previous studies have focused on various underlying factors such as values, attitude, concern and behavioural intentions etc. to predict behaviour of customers towards green products (Yadav and Pathak, 2016; Paul et al, 2016; Jaiswal and Kant, 2017). Customers are concerned for the protection of the environment but marketers realised that this did not convert into actual purchase behaviour when it comes to pay high price for green products (Mandese, 1991). One of the major barriers that consumers usually face in purchasing green products is high price of such products which cause less damage to ecology.

3. Methodology

The objective of this paper is to make a systematic review of empirical research papers and aims to achieve following objectives:

1. To explore various factors influencing customers to purchase or not to purchase green products.
2. To identify cause behind observed attitude-behaviour gap towards the purchase of green products on the basis of the factors identified.

An in-depth literature search in major academic journals, articles related to purview of this research was carried out with the help of various dominant databases such as Emerald, Elsevier, and Science Direct. The selection criteria that were followed for the selection of relevant studies are as follows: (1) The research papers should have been published during 2000-2018. (2) The work should be empirical in nature. (3) The study should focus on issues influencing purchase behaviour of customers towards green products. Systematic search procedure was followed to identify various research articles that include searching keywords in the title and keywords section of database. The main keywords used were: "green purchase behaviour", "green consumption", "attitude-behaviour gap", "sustainable purchasing", and "green products". This search process provides 132 research papers and content was examined by verifying the abstracts to assured that only appropriate journals would be included in the study. This process of careful analysis of the articles led to elimination of 55 articles. Hence 77 relevant articles were remained for the study.

Table 1 present various articles and dependent variable. It also shows selected studies arranged in chronological order. Only empirical studies were chosen because they are rarely vulnerable to bias.

Table 1: List of Studies affecting Green Purchase Behaviour

No.	Year	Author	Dependent Variable	
			Green Purchase Intention	Green Purchase Behaviour
1.	2000	Chan and Lau	✓	
2.	2000	Follows & Jobber	✓	
3.	2000	Bang	✓	
4.	2001	Chan	✓	
5.	2001	Laroche, Bergeron & Forleo	✓	
6.	2002	Makatouni		✓
7.	2002	Koullumus and Agyemen		✓
8.	2003	Magnussona		✓
9.	2003	Tanner and Kast		✓
10.	2004	Jain and Kaur		✓
11.	2005	Aguilar and Vlosky	✓	
12.	2005	Y. Kim & Choi		✓
13.	2005	Padel& Foster		✓
14.	2005	Terkiainen and Sundquist	✓	
15.	2006	Mostafa	✓	
16.	2006	Vermeir &Verbeke	✓	
17.	2007	Andres and Salinas		✓
18.	2007	Manaktola and Jauhari		✓
19.	2007	D'Souza and Khosla	✓	
20.	2007	Mostafa		✓
21.	2007	Wolsink	✓	
22.	2008	Pickter-Baker and Ozaki		✓
23.	2008	Lee		✓
24.	2008	McEachern and Warnaby		✓
25.	2008	Lea and Worsley		✓
26.	2008	Krytallias and Vassallo		✓
27.	2008	Vermeir &Verbeke	✓	
28.	2008	Tsakiridou et al.		✓
29.	2009	Chi, Yeh& Yang	✓	
30.	2009	Aryal and Sharma	✓	
31.	2009	Mondelaers	✓	
32.	2010	Peattie		✓
33.	2010	Jansson, Marell and Nordlund		✓
34.	2010	Smith &Paladino	✓	✓
35.	2010	Young, Hwang, McDonald, & Oates		✓
36.	2011	None and Datta		✓
37.	2011	Chea and Phau	✓	

38.	2011	Wahind, Rahbar and Shyan		✓
39.	2011	Rahbar and Wahid		✓
40.	2011	Khandelwal and Bajpai	✓	
41.	2011	Tan		✓
42.	2011	Lee		✓
43.	2011	Kim and Chung	✓	
44.	2011	Sinaappan and Rahman		✓
45.	2012	Chen and Lobo	✓	
46.	2012	Chen et al	✓	
47.	2013	Gleim at al.		✓
48.	2013	Rezai and Mohammad	✓	
49.	2013	Ansar	✓	
50.	2013	Albayark, Aksoy and Caber		✓
51.	2013	Leonidou, Katsikeas and Morgan	✓	
52.	2013	Joseph		✓
53.	2014	Davari and Strutton		✓
54.	2014	Khare and Mukherjee		✓
55.	2014	Dhager and Itani		✓
56.	2014	Nittala		✓
57.	2014	Wang and Chang		✓
58.	2015	Khare		✓
59.	2015	Igau et al.	✓	
60.	2015	Johnstone and Tan		✓
61.	2015	Punyatoya	✓	
62.	2015	Kumar and Ghodeswar		✓
63.	2015	Paul et al.	✓	
64.	2015	Moser		✓
65.	2015	Lai and Cheng		✓
66.	2016	Goh and Balaji		✓
67.	2016	Martin and Vaisto		✓
68.	2016	Hassan and Valenzuela	✓	
69.	2017	Ali et al.	✓	
70.	2017	Gocer and Oflac	✓	
71.	2017	Danish et al.	✓	
72.	2017	Khare and Varshneya		✓
73.	2017	Nguyen, Lobo and Greenland		✓
74.	2017	Yadav and Pathak		✓
75.	2017	Adnan, Ahmed and Khan		✓

76.	2017	Kautish and Dash		✓
77.	2018	Jaiswal and Kant		✓

4. Findings and results

A literature review of 77 journals disclosed that most of the studies found that there are various issues affecting customers' purchase behaviour towards green products.

4.1 Subjective norm / social influence – It can be described as “the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour”. In several studies, social influence has been observed as one of the most significant factors affecting purchase behaviour of customers towards green products (Lee, 2008; Cheah, 2009; Kim and Jung, 2011; Ghodeswar, 2015; Yadav and Pathak, 2016). But in some studies, consumers feel that the approval of family, friends, reference group etc. is not that much important to buy green products (Sinnappan and Rahman, 2011; Paul, Modi, and Patel, 2015). Therefore, on the basis of literature it was observed that social influence and peer influence possess strong and positive correlation with behaviour of customers in order to purchase green products

4.2 Perceived Behaviour Control – “Perceived behaviour control” refers to “the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour” (Ajzen, 1991). Many studies show that perceived behaviour control has a significant and positive influence on purchase behaviour of customers towards green products (Paul et al., 2016; Yadav & Pathak, 2017b). But it was also observed that the association between perceived behaviour control and environmentally friendly apparel purchase intention was found to be insignificant (Zheng and Chi, 2014). Therefore, further empirical examination is needed in this area to explore their effect on purchase behaviour of customers towards such products.

4.3 Awareness – Awareness was observed to be the utmost studied variable affecting behaviour of customers concerning purchase of green products. Knowledge about the environment is defined as one's capability to identify or define various symbol related to environment, beliefs and behaviour (Laroche et al., 2001). Several studies found that there are notable differences among the respondents' awareness and age, education level, earning etc (Rezai, Teng, Mohamed and Shamsudin, 2011; Maheshwari and Sakthivel, 2014; Singh and Kaur, 2016). One of the studies observed that consumers with higher education level, high earnings, who live in metropolitan cities and below 35 years of age were more likely to be aware of green food (Rezai, Teng, Mohamed and Shamsudin, 2011).

4.4 Perceived consumer effectiveness – Perceived consumer effectiveness is a significant factor found in previous literature and has been explained as “consumers' evaluation of the extent to which their small actions or efforts can make a significant difference in solving the overall problem” (Webster, 1975). The positive relationship between perceived consumers effectiveness and green purchasing behaviour of customers has been found in several studies (Lee, 2008; Sinnappan and Rahman, 2011; Tan, 2011; Jaiswal and Kant, 2017). The above findings advice that perceived consumer

effectiveness may have a positive influence on purchase behaviour of consumers towards green products.

4.5 Environmental Concern – If an individual is concerned towards the protection of the environment, he will change his purchase behaviour towards green products. Scholars stated that consumers' concern has a crucial impact on the attitude of consumers towards green products which in turn influences their purchase behaviour for green products (Yadav & Pathak, 2016; Paul, 2016; Jaiswal & Kant, 2017; Heo and Muralidharan, 2017). But it was also observed in few studies that green purchasing behaviour is not anticipated by consumer's concern (Barnett, Valdero, Unipan and Oskamp, 2010; Nittala, 2014) and this finding was consistent with Oskamp (1991). Therefore, further research is encouraged in this field to determine the influence of environmental concern on green purchase behaviour.

4.6 Trust – Trust can be described as a confidence of the consumers about ecological performance of organic or green products (Chen, 2013). It was observed in many studies that consumers believe green products are of lower quality when compared to other conventional products (Joseph, 2013; Moser, 2015). Consumers may be not ready to establish confidence or long-lasting relationship if firms use green washing to mislead them and ultimately it will affect the purchase behaviour of consumers towards green products (Maichum et al., 2016; Kwong, 2016; Zhang, Li, Cao, & Huang, 2018).

4.7 Price – Price can be stated as one of the significant aspects on which most of the purchasing decisions are based (Main and Hoffmann, 2012) and price influences the purchase decision of consumers to great extent (Yadav and Pathak, 2017). Extant literature also shows that high price of green products is one of the reasons that customers choose not to purchase green products and serve as an obstacle to green consumption (Choi and Parsa, 2007; Paul and Rana, 2012; Bezwada and Pauwels, 2013; Joseph, 2013). Hence, only for the benefit of environment or in order to be green, consumers are not ready to spend their income on high priced products. Thus, high price sensitivity negatively affects their green purchasing behaviour.

4.9 Perceived Environmental Responsibility – If consumers are emotionally engaged with several environmental issues and believe that they can individually solve these issues by adopting the activities that will not harm the environment; they will shift their purchase decision for green products (Lee, 2008; Sinappan and Rahman, 2011; Arli, 2011; Ghodeswar, 2015; Joshi and Rahman, 2015). Thus, it has been observed from the literature that there exists positive relationship between perceived environmental responsibility and green purchase behaviour, yet further in-depth investigation is required.

4.10 Availability of Green Product – Availability of green or eco-friendly product will positively influence the purchase behaviour of customers (Trakiainen and Sundqvist, 2005; Paul and Rana, 2012). It means that if there is availability of green products and consumers face no difficulty in searching for products, then they will consider green products in their purchase decisions. On the other side, limited availability or non-availability of a product had an adverse effect on its sale (Young et al. 2010; Joseph,

2013). On the basis of existing literature, it can be concluded that non-availability and inconvenience with which green products can be acquired are major barrier to green consumption.

Table 3: Factors affecting green purchase behaviour

Independent variable	Direction	Studies	Total no. of studies
Social norm / Social group / reference group	+	23, 34, 35, 54, 58, 62,72, 43	8
Knowledge /Awareness	+	9, 13, 35, 36, 41,70, 71,74,	8
Lack of information	-	13,56, 60	3
Personal value, personal norm	+	64	1
Environmental value	+	35, 43, 46, 71	4
Environmental concern	+	12,23,75,63, 74, 44, 36	7
Environmental attitude	+	9, 34, 44,65	4
Attitude towards green products	+	75,63,72, 43	4
Past habits	-		
Egoistic motives (health concern)	+	6, 13,25,34	4
Individualistic	+	25	1
Limited availability of green products	-	13,28,60	3
Availability of green products	+	25	1
Convenience	-	13	1
High perceived efforts	-	60	1
Perceived consumer effectiveness	+	12,	1
Quality traits	-	52, 36	2
Price	-	13, 28, 52, 36	4
High price- sensitivity	-	60, 36	2
Low- price sensitivity	+	25,64	2
Product attributes	+	52	1
Low confidence / trust in green product	-	13,28,52, 60, 36	5
Trust in Eco Label	+	39	1
Green trust	+	46	1
Green purchase intention	+	4,14,75, 72	4
Habits	-	13	1
Lifestyle	-	75	1
Personal values	+	9	1
Perceived time barriers	+	9	1
Perceived environmental responsibility	+	23,62, 44,65	4
Self-image	+	23, 58, 75	3

Pro-environmental behaviour	+	44	1
Perceived behaviour control	+	63,72, 43	3
Green product experience	+	62, 43, 71	3
Perceived environmental consequences	+	74	1
Lack of awareness of eco-label	-	56	1
Perceived seriousness of environmental problem	+	44, 65	2
Perceived consumer effectiveness	+	41	1

5. Discussions

Various factors affecting the readiness of customers to purchase green products were identified with the help of extensive review of literature. The concern of the consumers for the protection of the environment was observed to have a positive influence on purchase behaviour of consumers towards green products (Lee, 2008). It means that if an individual is concerned for various environmental issues then it also influences others' behaviour via peer group, family, friends etc. to purchase the products that will not harm the environment (Paul et al., 2016).

A positive impact of subjective/social norm on green purchase intention and behaviour has been observed (Lee, 2008; Arli, 2011; Yadav et al. 2017). However, some studies found that social norms negatively affect consumers' green purchase behaviour (Sinnappan et al. 2011; Lee 2011; Paul et al. 2016). Perceived behaviour control and perceived consumer effectiveness are two other crucial issues influencing green purchasing behaviour. It was observed that if consumers do not face any difficulty in performing the behaviour then it will positively influence their readiness for purchasing green product (Moser, 2015; Paul et al.2016).

6. Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The primary purpose of this paper is to review attitude-behaviour gap or reason why consumers' positive attitude does not translate into actual purchase behaviour. It also identifies various issues acting customers' behaviour towards the purchase of green products. The study found various drivers and barriers affecting green purchasing behaviour and provides feasible clarification for the observed green gap. Furthermore, it furnishes extensive structure of literature as it considers the results of many investigations that take place in the previous years.

6.2 Managerial Implications

The study provides significant managerial inferences. Marketers are suffering from various problems in motivating the customers towards purchasing of those products that do not produce adverse effect on the environment. Therefore, it informs the policy makers and marketers about the key determinant of customers' green purchase behaviour. In order to be successful, marketers need to understand these drivers and obstacles so that they can motivate customers to purchase such products which are dangerous for the environment.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, it has been observed that consumers are willing to purchase such that will not harm the environment but somehow it does not convert into actual purchases. Companies offering green products should remember that such products should be able to perform its functions effectively as consumers are not ready to compromise on traditional product features in order to be just green. For example, if the price of the organic or green face wash is 6 times the price of normal face wash, how an average customer is expected to purchase it? Such pricing strategies in which the price of the product is high, will only attract limited number of customers and will be purchased only by part of society thereby making it a 'niche product'. In order to overcome these problems, such pricing strategies should be followed by the companies which will encourage the consumers to purchase less harmful products.

As every research, this study also has also some limitations. For the review of literature, the authors attempted to be precise in choosing the research papers, but there are certain drawbacks remain that can be reduced by further research. Individuals from different social and cultural backgrounds may respond differently and the issues that have been identified may have different impact on them. Additional factors influencing the customers to purchase green products can be explored in future research.

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