

Attitude – Value Construct: A Review of Green Buying Behaviour

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Abstract

Green consumption habits are forming a part of lifestyle of humans. These consumption patterns either are intentional consumption behaviours or societal burdens. Ecologically conscious consumers are self actualized that they would act in a manner that not only satisfy their needs but also needs of others (society). Consumption behaviour is guided by various attitudinal and perceptual transformations that an individual goes through before the final consumption. Such that from the review it can be said that green purchase behaviour is direct outcome of consumer's attitude. Environmental knowledge, values/attitude plays a significant role in explaining ecologically friendly behaviour. Also as revealed from the review subjective product knowledge works as moderating variable between perceived behaviour and purchase intent, whereas attention to social comparison information (ATSCI) moderates relation between attitude and purchase intention. The purpose of this review is to explore the relationship between green attitude and its behavioural implication, the value orientation (individualistic/collectivistic) and social conscious consumption intentions that an individual develops. This theoretical paper aims to study the attitude-value-behaviour patterns of green consumers. Importance and Scope for future research are discussed.

Keywords:

Environmental Consciousness, Green Perception, Green Consumer Behaviour, Individualism, Collectivism.

Introduction

Public concern for ecological issues has shown an increase over the past three decades. In this modern era of societal marketing, business ethics and social responsibility are becoming the guiding themes for marketing strategies and practices. In fact marketers have started responding to consumers' growing ecological consciousness by developing "environment friendly" products. Although, this increase of interest in environment issues is not the same as the amount of interest and impact it has on consumer purchasing behaviors.

Companies should develop environmental strategies to address important global environmental issues and also to connect with consumers in a compelling and relevant way on a market-by-market basis". It is of importance to explore how consumers behave in their attitudes towards green products or environmentally friendly products (Tan Booi Chen & Lau Teck Chai, 2010)¹. Further values motivate and influence consumer behavior (Williams 1979)².

The Collectivistic and Individualistic values influence a variety of societal behaviours. As far as environmental behaviour is concerned, it is inclined

more towards future-oriented outcome that benefits society whereas on the contrary general consumer purchase behaviour is driven towards an assessment of benefits and costs that are important to the individual consumer (McCarty and Shrum 2001)³. However, there exists a cognitive dissonance between environmental consciousness as only a few 'green' products have been successful so far even though vast majority of consumers report that their purchase was influenced by environmental concerns. Also person-level tendencies of individualism or collectivism influence motivation to engage in environmentally conscious behaviour.

Literature Review

Attitude and Green Behaviour

Human behaviour is determined by attitude which influences behaviours either favorably or unfavorably (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980)⁴ Attitudes are relied on general set of one's belief. Three factors form attitude: cognitive, conative and affective. Knowledge of person and belief forms cognitive factor, conative factor describes the action of person or behaviour towards the object of attitude and affective indicates a feeling of person about the object of attitude. People with green attitudes are more inclined towards use of green products. Consumer's belief about green products results in their attitudes and finally their buying behaviour. Pinar Basgoze and Ozgur Ozkan Tektas (2012)⁵ concluded that people have environmental consciousness/attitude but fail to reflect it in their actions/behaviour. This attitude/behaviour gap exists due to lack of environmental knowledge.

Motivation for green buying behaviour develops through good attitude towards the environment and social responsibility that people relate to. (Kotler *et al* 2009)⁶. Green purchase behaviour is direct outcome of consumers green attitude enhanced by green awareness, government initiatives Ooi Jen Mei *et al* (2012)⁷. Simmons *et al* (1990)⁸ postulated that knowledge about environmental issues lead to effective and favorable attitudes.

Consumer Values and Green Behaviour

Values help to differentiate individuals and societies. They also explain the bases of behaviour and attitude. Shalom H Schwartz's (1992)⁹ divided human values into the four categories; conservation, self-enhancement, openness to change and self-transcendence. A combination of these values can be used for marketing purpose, but not all combinations are useful. Conservative values such as traditions do not conform to openness to change. A product cannot be promoted as innovative although it still being traditional at the same time. Williams and Dair (2007)¹⁰ argued that without developing the thought of preserving environment (Collectivistic Value), sustainable behaviour is not feasible.

Consumer choice for products not only reflects price and quality preferences but social commitment through purchase of environmentally friendly products. This increased concern and sense of social responsibility has led to remarkable growth in the global market for environment-friendly products (Hunt & Dorfman, 2009)¹¹. Values affect behaviour indirectly by influencing specific beliefs regarding an object, subject (Parsons and Shils 1951^a; Tolman 1951^b)¹². The ecologically conscious

consumers are self actualized such that they would act in a manner that not only satisfy their needs but also needs of others (society) (George Brooker 1976)¹³. Set of Individualistic or collectivistic values have been researched by various researchers to study their impact on social behaviours and the results revealed the useful impact of both the values. Dobson (2007)¹⁴ contradicts that behavioural change towards sustainable development caused by environmental citizenship factors leaves a lasting impact than financial incentives driven behaviour.

The above reviews of literature revealed that green purchase behaviour is affected way too much by attitude and value orientation of consumer towards the product. Traits of individualism or collectivism influence an individual's motivation to engage in environmentally conscious behaviour. Majority of consumers interpret their environmental features through modifications in their consumption characteristics (attitude-value modification)

Objectives of The Study and Methodology

The objective of the study is to analyze the role played by attitude and values construct of individuals in green/eco-friendly product purchase. It further tries to study the variations caused by individualistic and collectivistic values in influencing green purchase behaviour. The whole paper is based upon case studies, descriptive arguments and logical understanding gained through review of pertinent literature, research papers, reports, online data base and books.

Attitude Orientation

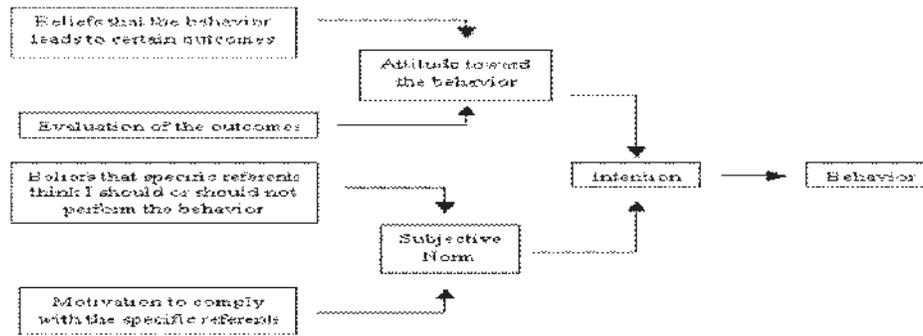
Attitude-Behaviour Predictors:

A review of pertinent empirical research of attitudinal predictors and behaviour shows that people's actions are found to be systematically related to their attitudes. Attitudes are held with respect to evaluation of the entity in question. Attitudinal and behavioural entities consist of four different elements:

- 1) Action
- 2) Target
- 3) Context
- 4) Time

Behaviour involve interaction of the above four elements. That is, a given action is always performed in regards to a given target, in a given context, and at a given time. A person goes through attitudinal process to reach a desired outcome or behaviour. Ajzen and Fishbein's theory of reasoned action is most influential models in predicting human behavior and behavioral dispositions.

FIGURE 1: AJZEN AND FISHBEIN’S THEORY OF REASONED ACTION



(Source: Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research.*) Simplified version

It describes how behavior is affected by behavioral intentions which, in turn, are affected by attitudes toward the act and by subjective norm. The attitude toward the act is a function of the perceived consequences people associate with the behavior. The subjective norm, is a function of beliefs about the expectations of important referent others, and an individual's motivation of complying with these referents.

Attitude and Green Consumption Behaviour

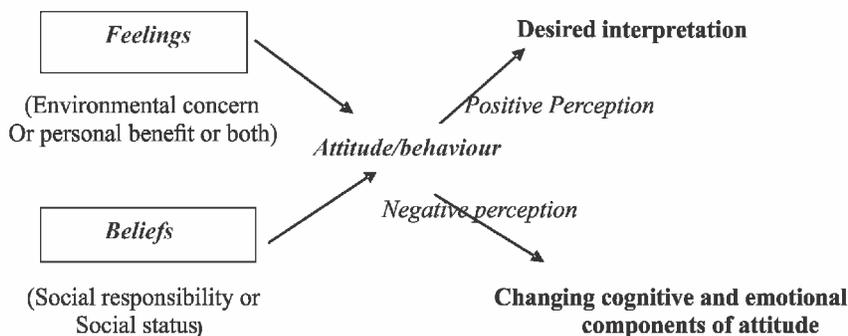
Environmentally conscious consumers look for the products produced in a sustainable way and spend money to enhance their personal health. Consumers with such an attitude to life are called LOHAS consumers (Lifestyle of health and sustainability) (Kotler et al 2009: 232)¹⁵ Majorly such consumers perceive environmental consciousness as a desired societal behaviour. Apart from green

attitude, social consumption is influenced by other factors like education, social status, price of products, age of customers etc.

A person's attitude towards environment:

- Is affected by environmental information exposure.
- Has a significant impact on his/her consumption behaviour.
- Shows dissonance with the desired behaviour at times (i.e green awareness or green preference).
- Can be modified by changing cognitive and emotional components.

FIGURE- 2: ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOUR INPUTS AND RESULTING OUTCOMES



The role of attitude to predict behaviour for an environmentally sensitive product can be attributed to the strength of attitude. That is high attitude-behaviour correlations exist when there is correspondence between attitudinal and behavioural entities. Lack of correspondence, however, does not necessarily nullify the relationship between attitude and behavior. Perceived behavioral control is more important in influencing a person's behavioral intention particularly when the behavior is not wholly under control. Perceived behavioural control becomes a salient factor in predicting a person's behavioral intention for green purchasing situation where consumers need not only more resources (time, information, etc.), but also more self-confidence in decision.

Frederick E. Webster, JR. (1975)¹⁶ found that behavioural, socio-economic and demographic variables have a minimal impact on socially conscious consumption behaviour of consumers. His study revealed that personality traits of an individual are better predictors of social conscious consumption. Also the subjective product knowledge works as moderating variable between perceived behaviour and purchase intent, whereas attention to social comparison information (ATSCI) moderates relation between attitude and purchase intention.

Value Orientation

Value and Green Consumption Behaviour

Human values have been studied for the purpose of understanding behaviour with respect to a specific situation or stimuli (Carman 1978^a; Williams 1979^b)¹⁷ Individualists and collectivistic oriented people differ in cognitions, behavioural motivations, emotions and social behaviour norms Triandis and Suh (2002)¹⁸.

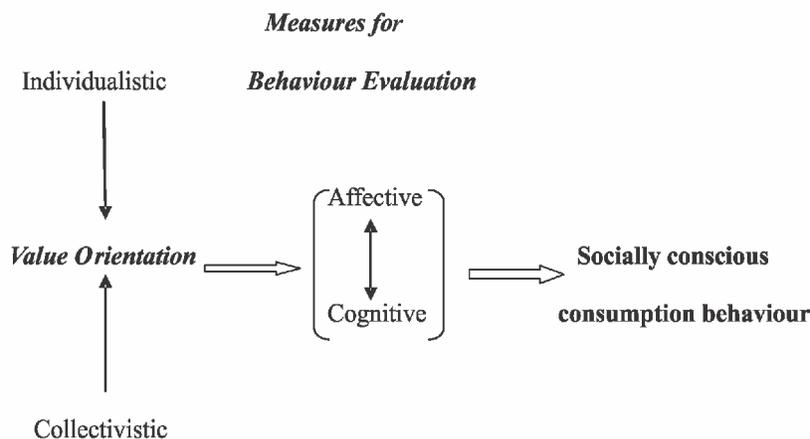
Compared to people in collectivist culture, individualistic people tend to be more self-centered, self-oriented independent, competitive; less cooperative, less willing to sacrifice for their in-groups, less loyal and emotionally attached to in-groups, and less concerned with their in-group goals, needs, views, beliefs, norms, welfare, interests, integrity and consequences. They tend to consider the individual self as a source of life identity, purpose and goals (Hofstede, 1991)¹⁹

Individualistic Value: Individual level of human value denotes a personality trait. Individualistic people are friendly to new ideas and behaviours.

Collectivistic Value: Collectivistic/Societal level demonstrates cultural features, which influence a variety of social behaviours. Collectivistic people stick back to traditional ideas and are hesitant to behavioural change.

Recent researches on green consumption behaviour conclude that Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE) acts as an important measure of impact of value framework on green behaviour. An individual's environmental concern might not translate into pro-environmental behaviour as opposed to an individual with a positive belief of his/her environmentally conscious behaviour outcome, tend to engage in such behaviour more often. Environment behaviour evaluation is possible only through the actual product purchase by an individual. People who are more collectivistic are likely to be concerned more about environmental problems than those who are less collectivistic. Also these people have higher self-efficacy in solving environmental problems.

FIGURE- 3: VALUES AND ITS EVALUATIVE COMPONENT GOVERNING GREEN BEHAVIOUR



Usefulness of Study for Marketers/Firms

This study pertains to the usefulness of analysis of consumer's value orientation and green conscious behaviour for the marketers. The Greater the perceived self value the greater is the chances that consumers will engage in green purchase behaviour. These human values and attitude-behaviour relationship can be used in

connection with cultural and behavioural categorization of proactive and laid-back green consumers and establishing their green marketing strategy respectively. Consistent and continuous reinforcement of self values should be provided for encouraging green purchase commitment among consumers.

Green behaviour should call for long term commitment and

therefore should be dealt with long term environmental gratification to the consumers. Green consumer's attitude and value based behaviour is an important marketing study area.

With a growing concern to sustainability issues across the globe marketing practices need to match with the green consumption attitudes of consumer. Environmental marketing and green consumption should be governed by social change and substitution in a phased manner. Green marketing should promise long term benefits by positive portrayal through marketing efforts in words and in deeds.

Conclusion & Suggestions

The review of the relevant literature suggests that environmentally responsible respondents tend to be guided by self transcendence values of equality, helpfulness and affinity for environment. An individual's behaviour has an effect on the environment. While consumers have positive attitudes towards purchasing products with eco-features. Further environmental concern has become infused in purchase decisions of many individuals owing to greater eco-friendly product awareness and positive attitude. The study also reveals that despite respondents' indications of intentions on purchasing eco-friendly products, there still exists a relatively weak link between intention and actual purchase decisions. When it comes to actual purchase, brand and price are still the key factors influencing consumer purchase decisions which firms/companies still need to focus on.

Further the purchase intention for eco-friendly product is governed by concern for the consequences of the purchase on the environment, environmental awareness. Companies marketing strategies emphasize on the negative impact of products on the environment. Therefore, companies/brands must invest in their brand positioning and market communication strategies to convert this negativity into an opportunity. It can be concluded that environmental attitude and value orientation has a positive effect on green perception and hence green purchase behaviour. Positive attitudes towards environmentally friendly products influence consumer's willingness to pay the price for environmentally friendly products and ultimately the intention to buy green products also increases. The more positive consumer awareness of the environment, and the higher the value orientation of consumers, the more positive the eco-friendly purchase behaviour will be. Hence future studies must focus on the impact of psychographic attributes including the attitude and value framework that encourages green consumption behaviour.

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