



## EXPLORING IMPACT OF PSYCHOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

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### ABSTRACT

Consumer behaviour is a very dynamic process in which a consumer while taking decisions regarding a green purchase undergoes certain cognitive responses which are backed by certain psychological processes like motivation, perception learning and attitude, by keeping all the factors in mind the consumer tend to arrive at a decision in which products are used having environmental impact with more recyclable value and less hazardous effect on the environment. Socio psychology is a field which studies how consumer behaviour drastically changes by considering different set of parameters, the researcher with the help of these parameters try to answer the questions like how consumers behave in a particular situation or how consumer act/change decision in a particular situation. The study tries to study the effect of Psychographic variables on the purchasing pattern of consumers. The segment of consumer with strong behaviour to buy green products is increasing rapidly or products with less harmful effect on environment have more demand in the market as compared to the general products. The findings reveal that consumer is willing to buy products with sustainable features in it as it would help the consumer in living a healthy life.

**KEYWORDS:** Psychographic factors, Consumer Behaviour, Environmental Concern, Consumer Attitude & sustainable consumption.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ecologically conscious consumer is an individual who prefers to buy green products over general products available in the market. Studies show that ecologically conscious consumer tends to show behaviour which is more towards the societal benefit (Wiener and Doeshner, 1991) or pro environmental conscious behaviour. Consumers showing concern towards the environment are the individuals who tend to purchase eco friendly products, use produce which do not harm environment and also try to dispose of the product in a way which causes least harm to the environment (Schlegelmilch et al., 1996). The consumer with ecological consciousness basis purpose is not to satisfy their needs and wants, but to do something for the society as a whole by saving the environment which has long term benefit for the future generation. Sustainable consumer behaviour is a complex and evolving subject, and simply answers substantive progress toward creating a more sustainable society. From a sustainable perspective, consumption needs to be understood more holistically as a total process, as part of a broader consumer lifestyle and as a process that is strongly influenced by the social context in which it takes place. Individual changes in purchasing behaviour can contribute to progress toward sustainability, but progress also depends on supports from deeper changes occurring within consumer lifestyle and throughout society. The green marketing concept can also be linked with holistic marketing concept where all the environmental activities are involved in making an environmentally acceptable product. These individuals are more open minded and ready to accept changes for the benefit of society as a whole and make the world a cleaner and greener place to live (Shamdasani, Chon-Lin, and Richmond, 1993; Peattie, 2011). A commitment to environmentally conscious behaviour can help an individual to develop a feeling of belonging to nature (Clayton, 2003). Individuals with strong environmental conscious behaviour tend to show great affinity towards environmental identity, environmental identity means how much close an individual is with the nature and how far can he go to protect the environment. Current researches show that recent environment conditions are so worse that they possess a serious threat to consumer's health (Kalafatis, 1999). Due to this recent past has seen drastic shift in individual concern towards environment and environmental problems (Diekmann & Franzen, 1999; Dunlap & Mertig, 1995). Concern related to environmental pollution is increasing at alarming rate (Chan, 2002). Customer of today's generation is much more aware of the negative effects which cause a threat to the environment due to which he/she is committed and willing to purchase environmental friendly products, this is the only reason that consumers today prefer to buy products from those organisations which are into business of making green products. All this has led to consider environmental concern as the most serious issue and made everybody to think and contribute to

protect environment. Researchers studying environmental concern have laid a lot of emphasis on consumer's values, beliefs and morals. It is considered that consumers own personal values are considered a major factor while his/her decision making regarding an eco friendly purchase. Consumers with pro-environmental value and belief system is more likely to have tendency to purchase green product or more likely to follow sustainable way of livelihood.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Ecologically conscious consumers are sometimes also considered as ethical consumers or socially conscious consumers as they exhibit traits which are beneficial for the society, these consumers usually use their purchasing power and consumption pattern to bring about a change in the society (Moisander, 2007). Ecologically conscious consumers possess high moral values and strong commitment towards the society because of which they depict green purchasing behaviour which in turn motivate others to follow green purchasing pattern to bring a change in the society for the benefit of the future generation. Studies show that thirty to forty percent of current environmental degradation is due to the consumption activities (Grunert, 1993). It is also evident from studies that today's consumer is moving away from the earlier self focussed one who was only thinking of himself, today's consumer along with value of the product is much more focussed on the sustainability of the product with the environment (Fletcher, 1990). Sustainable Green consumption is new concept which is popularly growing among new generation, almost all organisations both government and private are working on to manufacture green products. Although this global phenomenon is recently gaining importance, but the potential of purchasing green products to contribute towards sustainable development has been a very old phenomenon (Taylor, 1975). Ethically sensitive consumers are no longer a minority group today and it is believed that more than half of the consumers are ethically sensitive towards environment and are willing to buy eco friendly products (Nicholls, 2002) and it has also been found that more than 60 percent of consumers have bought green products showing their ethical sensitivity (Cowe and Williams, 2002). Many global bodies along with UN (United Nations) have set some guidelines regarding trade practices from one country to another in order to stop damage which can be caused to the environment. The UN general assembly has already made sustainable consumption aspects in UN guidelines on consumption pattern way back in 1999. The concept of environment pollution continues to be an important area to be dealt utmost care in both developed and developing countries. However green purchasing in the developed countries has shifted attention towards consumer environmentalism, which means not only buying green products but also contributing in making environment sustainable for living (Juwaheer et al 2012; Mintel, 2006). Green consumers generally buy products with characteristics such as recyclability and chemical

content, preferring consumption of products that are organic, energy efficient or have biodegradable packaging (Leonidou et al., 2010). Previous researches show that consumers are well aware of green products and are willing to pay extra from their pockets to go clean and green (Lee, 2009). A lot of research has been done regarding ecological and sustainable consumption and still been carried out in the developed and western countries. The change in consumption pattern has brought in many changes in the market like consumer is now much more aware about the products globally; the living standard of the consumers has changed drastically which has led many foreign players to enter the market. The consumer of today not only wants the product of good quality but also a sustainable environment for living. Consumers are now more willing to contribute their bit in making a sustainable environment for living by going for eco friendly purchases (Kalafatis et al., 1999). The change in consumption pattern has led to a change in the preference among consumers while choosing products, the consumer has now moved on from using general product to using products having least effect on environment or with recyclable value. Organisations now have ample of reasons to become socially acceptable by producing eco friendly products. Organisations are now finding ways to produce sustainable products which are less costly and have a value over a longer period of time. The organisations have discovered that there is huge scope for products with environmental benefits but organisations have to keep in mind that product should not only be eco friendly but also of good quality with affordable price (Strong, 1996; Crane, 2001). As there is increase in the purchasing power capacity of consumer so the today's consumer is willing to pay extra for eco friendly products. Various surveys show that the consumers during the last two decades have become aware and environmentally more conscious. Studies show that organisations using technology to produce green products have to spend in the initial phase but the investment in initial phase pays way for significant results in the longer run (Lindner, 2008). Considering the importance of the environment for human beings, the concept of sustainable development is getting attention, but it is still at a nascent stage. All this is only possible due to a positive response from consumers towards eco friendly products. The study shows that consumer is more committed in present scenario to live a sustainable way of lifestyle, the consumer is willing to spend extra and also contribute voluntarily in making earth a better and healthy place for living.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The research was conducted by circulating questionnaire among 730 consumers from J&K, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. The questionnaires were collected using convenient and simple random sampling. Pre testing of the questionnaire was also conducted to see the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, which was found reliable and valid. The questionnaire consisted of a structured

questionnaire in which the effect of dependent variables was to be studied on independent variable. The dependent variable comprised of Ecological consciousness, Environmental attitude, perceived value and subjective norms. The independent variable is sustainable consumption intention. The data was administered to multiple regression analysis to see the effect of dependent variables on independent variable.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The data collected was administered to hypotheses formulated which show that Ecological consciousness, Environmental attitude, perceived value and subjective norms have a positive influence on sustainable consumption intention. Further the hypotheses formulated show that Ecological consciousness predict sustainable consumption intention, Environmental attitude predict sustainable consumption intention, perceived value predict sustainable consumption intention & subjective norms predict sustainable consumption intention. After formulating the hypotheses the data collected was administered to cronbach alpha test to check the reliability and validity of scales used in measurement, the reliability used for the scales came out to be 0.615 which shows the scales used in the research are reliable. The variables were further administered to find correlation among themselves in which it was found that the independent variables: Ecological consciousness, Environmental attitude, perceived value and subjective norms are positively correlated to dependent variable, sustainable consumption intention. The correlating values of Ecological consciousness, Environmental attitude, perceived value and subjective norms in relation to dependent variable are found out be .745, .782, .614 and .517. The factors were further studied through regression analysis to see the effect of independent variables on dependent variable. The R<sup>2</sup> value comes out to be .407 which shows that 40.7% of sustainable consumption intention is explained by Ecological consciousness, Environmental attitude, perceived value and subjective norms.

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.629 <sup>a</sup>	.407	.401	.6714

a. Predictors: (Constant), EC, EA, PV& SN

**Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	Std. Error	Beta
(Constant)	1.376	.412	
EC	.326	.037	.331
EA	.279	.041	.269
PV	.141	.052	.147
SN	.107	.063	.103

The data after undergoing regression analysis formulates the following equation:

$$SCI = 1.376 + .326(EC) + .279(EA) + .141(PV) + .107(SN)$$

Where: SCI = Sustainable Consumption Intention

EC = Ecological Consciousness

EA = Environmental Attitude

PV = Perceived Value

SN = Subjective Norms

The multiple regression analysis of above variables concludes that sustainable consumption intention is affected by Ecological consciousness (32.6%), Environmental attitude (27.9%), perceived value (14.1%) and subjective norms (10.7%).

**CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results predict that Ecological consciousness, Environmental attitude, perceived value and subjective norms possess a positive significance while formulating a sustainable consumption intention. The study also shows that consumer is willing to purchase eco friendly products to lead a healthy life which do not harm the environment. The research also shows that out of the four variables ecological consciousness (32.6%) and environmental attitude (27.9%) plays a very significant role while predicting sustainable consumption pattern. The study further reveals that concern towards the environment and knowledge related to environmental issues helps in developing a positive attitude towards environment, which is backed by family and peer influence acting in protecting the environment. Consumers highly concerned to save nature possess feeling of being a part of nature and are willing to contribute towards saving environment. These consumers have a belief that they can save nature and are more willing to follow sustainable consumption patterns. The study also shows that like personal belief social norms are also very

important while predicting sustainable consumption, social norms include the influence of family, peer group and society on an individual while making a purchasing decision. Study shows that Consumers surrounded by peer more concerned towards environment are bound to influence the decision of consumer and eventually pursuing him/her to purchase green products. The study proposes findings which can be beneficial in future to make the planet more sustainable for living. The study also suggests that society which is environment friendly has set up certain norms in line with environment which help in saving environment to make earth a better place for living. Societies having a positive attitude towards environment are considered to be having more futuristic approach. The study also suggests that the organisation should lay sustainable efforts in marketing its products, it means the process starting from procurement of raw material to production of product till end usage of product by consumer should follow sustainable ways, meaning it in no way should harm or disturb the balance of nature. The study also suggest that organisations should come up with more innovative ideas which causes least harm to the environment, as the current consumer is concerned about environment protection and is willing to buy sustainable products at any cost.

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