Analysing Green Purchasing Behaviour through Subjective Norms and Perceived Behaviour Control

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ABSTRACT

The motive behind the research is to find and analyse the impact of subjective norms and perceived behaviour control on the purchasing pattern of consumers while selecting eco-friendly products. The increase in consumer awareness related to environment has led a complete change in his/her lifestyle. The consumer of today is well knowledgeable but there are also certain more factors which derive his attitude in a positive direction towards green purchases which will be studied through this piece of research. The purpose of the research is study the factors influencing eco-friendly behaviour of consumers. The study on basis of extensive literature review develops a structured questionnaire, which through SPSS shows that both subjective norms and perceived behaviour control effect positively while making a green purchase decision. The research provides a number of implications for the marketer which can be used in sustainable development of the society.

Keywords: Subjective Norms; Perceived Behaviour Control; Green Purchase Intention.

1.0 Introduction

There has been an abrupt increase in Environmental consciousness in recent times. The whole world is concerned about the environmental issues and its future state. The environmental condition is becoming worse day by day and the environment is getting polluted. The main reason behind this condition of environment has been considered as the increased interference of humans with the natural environment. A number of studies reveal that environment is considered as urgent and a vital concern (Dembkowski & Hammer-Lloyd, 1994).

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As a result businesses have been realizing that their production and consumption has a direct impact on the environment therefore there is an urgent need to be concerned for the natural environment and subsequently initiate sustainable green practices as well as involving consumers by enhancing their awareness for creating a favourable attitude and behavioural dispositions towards environment and green products (Lehman and Axelord, 1993). Many researches show that environmental knowledge does not always lead to eco-friendly purchases, there are many more factors which lead to develop positive attitude regarding purchase of green products (Aspinall, 1993).

Many researchers have looked at numerous drivers of environmental conscious consumer behaviour in an attempt to understand the psychological, economic, cultural and other influences of the phenomenon (Mostafa, 2007). Sustainable consumption as a discourse, a field of enquiry and a course of action has arisen within the context of growing awareness of the ecological limitations on human activity. There are also evidences which show that consumer attitude and environmental knowledge are not only the factors which drive green purchase but along with it there are also other variables which effect consumer’s purchases (Kaiser, 2006). The research study will try to find out the other variables which affect purchase decision and their relation regarding the purchase behaviour of consumer. Our lifestyle has changed very rapidly as compared to few decades ago. Today more and more people are caught up in the endless cycle of buying and throwing away, seeing consumption as mean of self-fulfilment reason (Chiou, 1998). Demand towards product is driven by convenience and habits whose return is hard to change. Truly consumers had little knowledge of the link between their consumption choices and the environmental consequences. Therefore the increase in environmental consciousness has had a thoughtful effect on the consumer behaviour with the green product market expanding at a remarkable rate (Fraj, & Martinez, 2007).

Consumer behaviour towards environmental friendly products consists of many variables and dimensions which derive consumers' choice in regard to purchasing environmental friendly products (Thogersen, 2007). These variables can be grouped into values, beliefs, knowledge, needs, motivations, attitude and demographics. Values influence behaviour and consumers must value protecting the environment before they can have the intention of buying environmental friendly products. Weigel (1985) argued that the consumers must feel that, when they purchase an environmental friendly product they will make some sort of material difference. Thus the study will explain other factors effecting green purchase decision and try to construct an interrelation among the resulting determinants.
2.0 Literature Review

Environmentally conscious buying behaviour is a attribute of socially conscious behaviour which reflects a deep sense of concern towards environment. The concern has led to a change in the consumption pattern of consumers having sense of belongingness with environment which has led to increase in green purchases (Anderson and Cunningham 1972). Previous researches show that People having knowledge about environment are more likely to show tendency of conservation environment thus leading to green purchases (Van Liere and Dunlap 1980). Consumer’s perception is drastically affected by both his self-controlled behaviour and behaviour built by his/her peer group, family members, referral groups etc. (Hofstede, 1980). It has been confirmed that individual behaviour as well as group behaviour help in making choices which are not against the environment (Roberts, 1995). Researches also show that people with collective behaviour have more tendencies to buy eco-friendly products than people having individualistic approach (Kim and Choi, 2005). Studies have shown that except environmental knowledge and environmental attitude there are also other factors like subjective norms and perceived behaviour control which affect consumers purchase decision (McCarty and Shrum 1994).

Perceived consumer behaviour is mainly the values of self, which or self-evaluation criteria which play an important role in one’s decision making process (Ellen, Wienere and Cobb-Walgren, 1991). Perceived consumer behaviour affects the willingness of consumer to indulge in protection of environment related activities by going for green purchases. Recent researches predict that perceived consumer behaviour strengthens the attitude-behaviour relationship while making eco-friendly purchases (Lee and Holden, 1999). Subjective norms are the other factor which affects the purchasing decision of consumer’s. Subjective norm is the presumption about what other expects an individual to perform in a particular situation (Schlegelmilch,1996). Subjective norm is a behavioural function and is mostly affected by the expectations and his/her own positive experiences (Fishben and Ajzen, 1977). In fact, subjective norms addresses the impact of perceived social force to carry out particular behaviour (Ajzen, 1991),whereas perceived behavioural control has its roots in Atkinsons’s (1964) theory of achievement motivation emphasising expectancy of Success. The role of subjective norms influencing purchase intention has been underlined by the various studies such as Cawley (2004), Robinson and Smith (2002); Biel and Thogersen (2007); Lee and Green (1991); Chen (2007) and Gotschi et al. (2007). Cawley (2004) has postulated that subjective norms provide information regarding an appropriate behavioural decision. Jager (2000) gave inferences from his study that subjective norms have an influence while making a purchase decision.
regarding an ecological product. Chen (2007) and Gotshi et al. (2007) have indicated that there exists a relationship between subjective norms and purchase intention which is both significant and positive. In another study by Biel and Thogersen (2007) subjective norms have been analysed to extensively affect the behaviour in making a purchase which is driven by responsibility towards environment.

Lee and Green (1991) in their study have concluded that subjective norms are a collection of cultural values and societal norms which have an impact on the decision making of purchasing an environmental friendly product. All these studies have concluded that subjective norms perceived to affect purchase intention. Besides subjective norms, consumer purchase decision is a complex process affected by situational factor i.e. perceived behaviour control which is pointed out by a number of studies (Atkinson, 1964; Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Taylor and Todd, 1995; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006). In another study by Vermeir and Verbeke (2008) perceived consumer effectiveness which is a dimension of perceived behaviour control affects the purchase intention of a consumer. Therefore it can be formulated that subjective norms and perceived behaviour control significantly affect purchase decision of consumers thus following hypothesis are formulated.

H1: Subjective norms possess a significant relationship with Purchase Intention towards green purchases.

H2: Perceived behaviour control possess a significant relationship with Purchase Intention towards green purchases.

3.0 Methodology

The research was conducting by administering a total number of 700 questionnaires among the young respondents out of which only 630 were found making valid sense. The respondents were of age group ranging between 20 years to 35 years. The research was conducted by circulating structured questionnaire among consumers from states of J&K, Punjab and Haryana. The structured questionnaire comprised of three sections: section A comprised of demographic profile of respondents in which it was found that 62.8% population belonged to male category and 37.2% to female category. Further it was studies that most of the respondents belonged to family having average monthly income group and the percentage found was 42.6%. Section B dealt with subjective norms in which most of the questions were regarding influence of family, peer group and society on behavioural decision related to green products. The third and last section was Section C which comprised of questions related to perceived behaviour control. In this section the questions were mainly designed to analyse the
effect of individuals perceived capability regarding purchasing green products and ability in influencing others decision towards green products. The scales used in the questionnaire were adapted from Fryxall and Lo (2003), Kaufmann et al, (2012), Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Ajzen(1991) with certain changes that suited the current research. All the items were studied using five- point Likert scale as the measurement tool. The sampling technique comprised of convenience as well as simple random sampling. The tool used for administering data was SPSS software.

4.0 Data Analysis and Results

On basis of data collected the variables were first administered to Cronbach alpha test to see reliability of scales used in the research, which came out to be .728. Which is more than minimum acceptable level (.5) predicting the scales used in the research as valid and reliable. Further correlation among the variables was studied which came out to be .614 for Subjective norms and purchase intention and .571 for perceived behaviour control and purchase intention predicting both independent variables (subjective norms & perceived behaviour control)have positive correlation with dependent variable(purchase intention) (Table 1).

| Table 1: Correlation Matrix |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Variable                    | Purchase Intention(PI) |
| Subjective Norms (SN)       | .614 (**)        |
| Perceived Behaviour Control(PBC) | .571(**)      |

(** - Significance at 0.01 level (2 – tailed); N=630)

The factors were further studied through regression analysis to see the effect of independent variables on dependent variable, after analysing the factors it was found out that subjective norms and perceived behaviour control have positive influence on purchase intention of green products. The adjusted R² value comes out to be .432 which shows that 43.2% of willingness to buy green products is explained by subjective norms and perceived behaviour control (Table 2).

<p>| Table 2: Result of Regression Analysis |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Model Summary                         |                 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.659*</td>
<td>.434</td>
<td>.432</td>
<td>1.545</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), SN, PBC
Table 3: Regression Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.207</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td>3.564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PBC</td>
<td>.330</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SN</td>
<td>.625</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the analysis (Table 3) following regression has been formulated to see the effect subjective norms and perceived behaviour control on purchase intention regarding green purchases.

\[ \text{PI} = 2.207 + .625 \times \text{(SN)} + .330 \times \text{(PBC)} \]

where: PI=Purchase Intention
SN=Subjective Norms
PBC=Perceived Behaviour Control

5.0 Implications and Conclusions

The aim of the study was to find the effect of subjective norms and perceived behaviour control on purchase intention of consumers while making a green purchase. The study tries to give an insight that there are also other drives except environment knowledge which influence the purchasing decision among consumers. The others drivers include factors such as group influences, peer group influences, self-controlled behaviour, derived experiences and collectivism, these factors have been broadly classified into two categories namely subjective norms and perceived behaviour control. The findings of the study also reveal that environmental knowledge and environmental attitude no doubt play an important role in green purchase decision but subjective norms and perceived behaviour control also cannot be neglected in fact they also play a very vital role in moulding the behaviour of consumers while going for an eco-friendly purchase. The study also highlights the importance of intervening factors playing a major role in willingness to buy. The findings of the study also throw light that there exists a positive relation among both subjective norms related to purchase intention and perceived behaviour control related to purchase intention. The present study depicts that subjective norms and perceived behaviour control are an important ingredient of consumer behaviour while determining consumer’s ecological consumption, which means consumers with positive subjective norms and favourable perceived behaviour control are more willing to buy ecologically considered products. The study also depicts
that subjective norm and perceived behaviour control have positive correlation with purchase decision regarding green products. These findings narrows down the gap between environmental knowledge and willingness to buy by making the marketer to focus on two other factors which are subjective norms and perceived behaviour control other than environmental knowledge and attitude, by focussing on these two parameters the marketer enhances the chances of green buying.

6.0 Limitations and Future Scope

The limitation of the study is that it does not represent whole set of target customers, it represents only a portion of it so there is a scope to include whole set of population to get closer to accurate results. The other limitation of the study is that still the consumer is not well aware about green products and green consumption pattern only well-educated consumers have a detailed knowledge rest possess a very limited knowledge regarding green consumption. The focus of the study was to draw relationship among variables affecting purchase intention so only few factors were considered, future research can consider a broader variety of factors so an elaborative framework can be formulated. Despite all these limitations green consumption is growing at a very rapid pace which could be area of future study for researchers to find parameters and ways which enhance eco-friendly consumption pattern which in turn leads to overall sustainable development of the environment.

References


