

## DETERMINANTS OF ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Uma Pricilda Jaidev\* Debora Dhanya A\*\* and Rishabh Shekhar\*\*

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**Abstract:** In recent years there has been a major emphasis and interest in green consumption. Therefore, companies are promoting their products with green branding, eco-labeling and green packaging strategies in order to attract environmentally concerned consumers. The main purpose of this paper is to examine two attitudinal correlates of environmentally conscious consumer behavior (ECCB), namely, perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) and ecological concern (EC). A study was conducted among consumers in Tamilnadu, India. A detailed online survey was conducted with the help of a well-structured questionnaire. 207 responses were taken for final data analysis. PCE was found to be the most significant predictor of ECCB. Multiple regression analysis revealed that both the attitudinal correlates together explain about 59.1% variation in ECCB.

**Keywords:** Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, Ecological Concern, Environmentally Conscious Consumer Behavior, Green Consumption.

### INTRODUCTION

Due to the globalization, commercialization and industrialization, environmental problems have increased that is now detrimentally affecting the world that we live in. The past decades witnessed economic growth due to increasing consumption by consumers across the world. This has resulted in the deterioration of the environment through excess use of natural resources, high levels of consumption of commercial goods. This has resulted in the degradation of the environment leading to global warming, pollution of the rivers and the seas, desertification as well as acid rains (Ramlogan, 1997). Grunert (1993) registered that 40 % degradation in the environment issue has been bought by the private households due to their consumption patterns. Consumers also worry about the future and as a result have started to become more conscious to use eco-friendly products. Companies have thus started to market their products to the environmentally conscious customers by incorporating green marketing strategies (Boztepe, 2012). The alternate name of green is called as “pro-environmental “. The term green refers to the physical environment such as air, water, land. Another way of explaining the green concept is solid wastes recycling process & energy conservations (Shrum et al., 1995). Green marketing was first used in a seminar on “ecological marketing” which was organized by the American Marketing Association (AMA) in 1975.

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\* Associate Professor, VIT Business School, VIT University, Vellore. *E-mail:* [umapricilda.j@vit.ac.in](mailto:umapricilda.j@vit.ac.in)

\*\* Research Associate, VIT Business School, VIT University, Vellore. *E-mail:* [dhanya3add@gmail.com](mailto:dhanya3add@gmail.com), [shekhar.rshekhar@gmail.com](mailto:shekhar.rshekhar@gmail.com)

There are two purposes of green marketing (Uydaci, 2002). The company has to produce the products which have attributes like low cost, the products which are eco-friendly, that cause very less to the environment. Thus the concept green marketing includes activities such as modifications related to the products, changes related to the packages as well as modifications related to the advertisings. Unfortunately, majority of the people believe that green marketing only covers products that are recyclable. Green marketing can also be practiced in services sectors. For example a resort can be designed and portrayed to be an “ecotourist” facility that has very less impact on the environment (May, 1991, Ingram & Durst, 1989, Troumbis, 1991). Thus green marketing can be practiced in the service sector as well.

Green marketing is also called as environmental marketing or sustainable marketing defines as the “*organization’s efforts at designing, promoting, pricing and distributing products that will not harm the environment*” (Pride and Ferrell, 1993). Polonsky (1994) also defines green marketing “*all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment*”. Elkington (1994) defines “*green consumer as one who avoids products that are likely to endanger the health of the consumer or others; cause significant damage to the environment during manufacture, use or disposal; consume a disproportionate amount of energy; cause unnecessary waste; use materials derived from threatened species or environments; involve unnecessary use of, or cruelty to animals; adversely affect other countries*”.

The AMA workshop defined ecological marketing as the study of negative as well as positive aspects of the marketing activities such as pollutions, depletion of energy as well as depletion related to the non-resources (Henion and Kinnear 1976 b). “*Green or Environmental Marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment*” (Polonsky, 1994).

The reason behind companies adopting green marketing are as follows:

1. The practice of adopting green marketing by the organization made the companies easily to meet their objectives (Keller, 1987, Shearer, 1990).
2. The other reason is that an organization believes that they have some moral obligations to be socially responsible (Davis, 1992, Freeman and Liedtka 1991, Keller, 1987, McIntosh, 1990, Shearer, 1990).
3. Due to governmental bodies forcing the firms to go green (NAAG, 1990).
4. Due to the cut-throat competition firm are adopting the environmental marketing activities (NAAG, 1990).
5. Due to the minimal cost and the materials usage reductions firms are compelled to change to green marketing (Azzone and Manzini, 1994).

In simple terms a green product is also called as an ecological product or environmental friendly product. Shamdasami *et al.*, (1993) defined as the green product which will not pollute the environment as well as earth, overcoming of depletion of natural resources and which can be easily recycled as well as conserved. Product which carry attributes such as environmentally friendly packaging which has less impact on the environment can also be classified as a green product.

The consumers who are aware as well as interested in the environmental related issues are called as 'green consumers' (Soonthonsmai, 2007). Green consumers are defined as those who organizing petitions, boycott manufacturers as well as retailers who sell products that cause damage to the environment and undertake activities to preserve the planet (Fergus, 1991). Ottman (1992) studied and found that the consumers accepted green products when their primary need such as convenience, affordability, quality, performance were met, and when they actually understood that the green products also solved their problems.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many studies have examined the green consumer behavior and its determinants. A recent study of Bailey, Mishra and Tihamiyu (2016) has examined the Indian Consumers' green consumption values and their response towards green marketing communications and found that green consumption value has a significant impact on purchase intention towards green products and the study also found how consumers respond towards advertising and public relations. The study of Kumar and Ghodeswar (2015) examined the factors that affect consumers' green product purchase decisions and stressed that the factors such as willingness to support environmental protection, realization of environmental responsibilities, and inclination towards searching green product-related information and learning about green products affect green product purchase decision. In addition to the previous study another study has explored the determinants of green purchasing behavior of young urban consumers in India and found the five major factors-green purchasing behavior, environmental involvement, environmental attitude, environmental consciousness and perceived effectiveness of environmental behavior have significant impact on green purchasing behavior (Uddin & Khan, 2016). A study on young consumers' green purchase behavior predicted that social influence, perceived environmental knowledge, recycling and eco-labelling and exposure to environmental messages through the media have a positive impact on the attitude towards green purchase behavior (Joshi & Rahman, 2016). Psychographic variables play a greater role in determining the perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) and altruism than socio-demographics in turn leads to ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB) (Akehurst, Afonso, & Martins Gonçalves, 2012).

Therefore consumers' with higher ecologically conscious consumer behavior have a higher purchase intention towards green products and services and a study has hypothesized and proved that ECCB has a positive impact on GBP, higher than GPI, which in turn mediates that relationship. Studies have also hypothesized and proved that the better green brand positioning and knowledge towards green products leads to create a positive attitude and in turn intention towards green products (Suki, Suki, & Azman, 2016; Mohd Suki & Mohd Suki, 2015; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). The study of Teng & Wang, (2015) contradicts the previous studies and stated that perceived organic knowledge found to be insignificant towards creating the consumer trust, attitudes and purchase intention in the context of green organic foods. In addition to the previous studies on consumers' knowledge towards green brands, Martinez *et al.*, (2015), studied the concept environmentally sustainable consumer behavior (ESCB) with behavioral perspective model (BPM) and social capital theory and explained that social capital shapes a consumer's knowledge towards environmental issues and pro-environmental attitudes influences consumer's engagement towards eco-behavior.

Environmentally conscious consumers and their involvement leads to form eco- friendly intentions and behaviors (Thieme *et al.*, 2015). In the context of environmentally conscious consumers' the choice of selecting the best green alternative is dependent on the green premium rewards, offers and market incentives (Mina Okada & Mais, 2010). Narendra Singh, (2009) has stated in his study that demographic variables such as age and income acts as a significant determinants of socially responsible consumer behavior (SRCB), and concluded that young female consumers have shown more social responsible activities. Bertrandias & Elgaaied-Gambie (2014) studied and found that social dimension such as social risk and self-incongruity influence one's purchase decision towards green products. Consumer metrics and strategies towards green products measures the consumers' purchase intentions of new green, recycled/refurbished products, green company processes and a non-green product/process (Borin,, Lindsey-Mullikin,, & Krishnan, 2013). In the situation of anticipated conspicuousness of consumers' choice of organic products the variables like self-monitoring ability and attention to social comparison information (ATSCI) influence and determines the green consumer behavior (Aagerup *et al.*, 2016; Kaman Lee , 2008) has revealed that social influence, environmental concern, concern for self-image and perceived environmental responsibility strongly predicts the green purchasing behavior of consumers. Albayrak, Aksoy, & Caber (2013) also stated the environmental concern significantly influence the green purchase behavior. Perceived value mediates and moderates the perceived quality and perceived savings on green purchase intentions (Lee Weisstein, Asgari, & Siew, 2014). Chen & Lee (2015) have studied on the green psychological variables such as green trust, green satisfaction, green brand equity, and green purchase intention in Starbucks store and found that ethical sourcing

significantly influenced the green psychological variables. Onel & Mukherjee (2015) have studied 12 variables and categorized them into 3 different stages based on the consumption process of consumers: purchase, usage, and post-use, which influence the pro-environmental behaviors of consumers (biospheric values, egoistic values, altruistic values, environmental concern, awareness of consequences, ascription of responsibility, subjective norms, attitudes towards behavior, perceived behavioral control, personal norms, affect, and behavioral intention).

Huang, Yang, & Wang (2014) have proposed that the relationship among green brand positioning (GBP), green brand knowledge (GBK) significantly influence attitude toward green brand (AGB), and in turn leads to green purchase intention (GPI). The role of green perceived value, green perceived risk, and green trust have a positive impact on purchase intention towards green products and services. Tilikidou, (2007) has examine the ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB) is affected by the factors such as geographical area, education, attitudes towards recycling and locus of control over politics influences ECCB. Therefore, it is important for the companies to promote green branding, eco-labeling and green packaging strategies in order to encourage a greener pattern of consumption (Devi *et al.*, 2012). Based on the previous literature the study focused on finding “How green are you, really?” Consumers’ skepticism toward brands with green claims by Ulusoy *et al.*, (2016). The purpose of this paper was to examine the relationship between perceptions of brands advertising claims of environmental sustainability, intention to purchase such brands and the role of trust. The results suggest that consumers who did not report high environmental concern had high brand trust but no significant purchase intention; consumers who reported high environmental concern had significant intention to purchase green products, but negative trust in brands which were advertised with a claim to be green. Efforts to advertise green claims may only be effective for consumers without an intention to purchase green products, and may alienate consumers who are interested in purchasing such products. A structural equation modelling was tested on a post hoc basis with a sample size that did not warrant very good fit ratios.

### **Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE)**

Perceived consumer effectiveness is a measure of an individual consumers judgement in his or her ability to affect environmental resource problems (Antil, 1978). Webster (1975) found that “this variable was the only one of 10 independent variables to be a significant predictor for all three of his dependent variables” (Roberts,1996b). Kinnear et al. (1974) found that when consumers perceive that they can be have a voice and act to avoid pollution related problems, they will show more concern for the environment.

Both Tucker (1978) and Henion (1976) found consumers with an internal locus of control (conceptually similar to high perceived consumer effectiveness) exhibited a greater tendency to show socially responsible attitudes and behaviour, one of which can be environmentally conscious behaviour. Research studies of Berger and Corbin, (1992); Weiner and Doescher, (1991) indicates that consumers' levels of PCE do affect their likelihood of performing ECCBs. Despite these results, further research is needed to investigate the relationship between PCE and ECCB. Public opinion on self-efficacy may have changed as a result of increased media coverage of environmental disasters and a heightened sense that environmental problems are large and complex and should be the responsibility of government and big business (Maibach, 1993).

### **Environmental Concern (EC)**

Ecological (Kinneer et al., 1974) and environmental (Van Liere and Dunlap, 1980, 1981) concern have often been used as substitute for highlighting social responsibility. The fact that ecologically conscious consumers will score higher on a measure of environmental concern should not be a great surprise. These concepts are closely related, and one would expect that if one is concerned about the environment, this concern may lead to more ECCB (Antil, 1984). However, as stated earlier, a general increase in environmental concern across the population strongly suggests that this important relationship be investigated. Although consumers feel strong about the environment, it is only a small portion of that act on these concerns in the marketplace.

As Maibach (1993) points out, environmental concern may be high, but many consumers feel that preservation of the environment is the responsibility of government and/or big business, or that the costs of complying are too high. "*Price, quality, convenience, and consumer cynicism and confusion over environmental claims all may intervene between environmental concern and consumer behavior*" (Roberts, 1996b).

### **Based on the literature, the following hypotheses are proposed**

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between environmental consciousness (EC) and ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB).

**H2:** There is a positive relationship between perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) and ECCB.

**H3:** There is a significant influence of EC and PCE on ECCB

### **METHODOLOGY**

The questionnaire was administered through an online survey. 207 usable responses were taken for final data analysis. The respondents include faculty and staff members of educational institutions as well as both post graduate and undergraduate students.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

<i>Demographic Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	122	58.93
Female	85	41.06
<i>Age</i>		
18 yrs - 20 yrs	22	10.62
20 yrs - 30 yrs	54	26.08
30 yrs - 40yrs	62	29.95
40 yrs- 50 yrs	28	13.52
50 yrs-60yrs	27	13.04
60 yrs above	14	6.76
<i>Income</i>		
No Income	38	18.35
Below 2.5 lakhs per annum	24	11.59
2.5 - 5 lakhs per annum	28	13.52
5 -10 lakhs per annum	34	16.42
10-15 lakhs per annum	48	23.18
15 lakhs and above	35	16.90

The respondents were asked to fill and return the survey within a week. They were given one reminder in between about the survey. Table 1 provides a complete summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

### **SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

The dependent variable, ECCB (Roberts, 1996b), measures the extent to which individual respondents purchase goods and services believed to have a more positive (or less negative) impact on the environment. The ECCB construct was measured using the same 30-item scale used in the Roberts (1996b) study. The individual items were in a Likert-format, anchored by ``Always True'' (5) and ``Never True'' (1).

Perceived consumer effectiveness is a measure of an respondents judgment in the ability of individual consumers to affect environmental/resource problems (Antil, 1978). Previous research has found PCE to be a valid construct with the ability to distinguish between high and low eco- logically conscious consumers (Antil, 1978; Kinnear et al., 1974; Webster, 1975). The scale included four Likert- type items.

Environmental concern is a measure of the individual's concern for the environment. The 12-item new environmental paradigm (NEP) scale was originally developed by Dunlap and Van Liere (1978) and later tested by Noe and Snow (1990). After extensive testing, Noe and Snow (1990) concluded the NEP scale was an advanced tool for measuring environmental concern. The scale includes 12 Likert-type items.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The relationship between the three variables *i.e.* EC (environmental concern), PCE (perceived consumer effectiveness) and ECCB (ecologically conscious consumer behavior) was checked.

**TABLE 2: CORRELATION VALUES**

		<i>EC</i>	<i>ECCB</i>	<i>PCE</i>
EC	Pearson Correlation	1	.662**	.424**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	207	207	207
ECCB	Pearson Correlation	.662**	1	.736**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	207	207	207
PCE	Pearson Correlation	.424**	.736**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	207	207	207

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows the results of the Pearson Correlation test. It can be seen that the significance values in both the cases are 0.000 which is less than 0.05 (95% significance level). It must be noted that even at 99% significance level, the correlation is significant. Hence, there is a significant relationship between EC and ECCB and between PCE and ECCB. It can be observed from the table that there exists a strong positive relationship between ECCB and EC (*i.e.* 0.662) and also between PCE and ECCB (*i.e.* 0.736). It can also be observed that there is a moderately positive relationship between the two independent variables *i.e.* PCE and EC.



Therefore, H1 and H2 are confirmed.

To test hypothesis 3, H3: There is a significant influence of EC and PCE on ECCB, Regression analysis was used. The relationship between the independent variables (*i.e.* EC and PCE) and the dependent variable was estimated. Table 3 presents the results:

**TABLE 3: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS BETWEEN EC,PCE AND ECCB**

<i>Model</i>	<i>Un-standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard error of beta</i>	<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Constant	.156	.196	–	0.827	.183
EC	.529	.035	.498	10.297	0.000**
PCE	.448	.048	.432	9.276	0.000**
Multiple R = 0.654		R <sup>2</sup> = 0.591	Adj R <sup>2</sup> = 0.573	F Value = 107.91	

The above table shows the result of the multiple regression analysis. It can be seen that the significance values are 0.000 which is less than 0.01 (99% significance level). Hence, there is a significant influence of EC and PCE on ECCB. The table provides the R and R square values. The R value represents the multiple correlation which is 0.784. The R square value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable *i.e.* ECCB can be explained by the independent variables *i.e.* EC and PCE. In this case 59.1% can be explained, which indicates that both the independent variables EC and PCE significantly influence ECCB.

## IMPLICATIONS

This article has an important implications. It gives a input & insights to the marketing managers about the two key predictors of environmentally consciousness consumer behavior that drive green consumer purchasing behaviour. This would be helpful to marketing managers to formulate marketing strategies and streamline the product offerings which may lead to succesful green marketing. Marketing strategies such as segmentation, advertising srategies such as message and media strategies can be formulated based on the outcomes of this study. It can be seen that between perceived consumer effectiveness and environemtal concern, PCE is the strongest predictor of ECCB. Therefore, marketing strategies must be developed in such a way that consumers are made to be seen as the “change agents” that they can be to

build a consumption culture that is conscious of the cost that consumption patterns will cause to the environment. Also, social marketing can largely benefit from this study. Companies that engage in social marketing may find the results of this study useful. This study identified various determinants of environmental consciousness of consumer behavior through the review of literature. This study is also helpful to increase consumer awareness related to the environmental issues.

## CONCLUSION

Green consumption, is closely related to the notion of sustainable development or sustainable consumer behavior. It encourages consumption that is compatible to safeguarding the environment for the present and for the next generations. It is a concept which ascribes to consumers responsibility or co-responsibility for addressing environmental problems through adoption of environmentally friendly behaviors, such as the use of organic products, clean and renewable energy and the research of goods produced by companies with zero or lesser negative impact on the environment.

Although 59.1% of variation in ECCB can be explained by the two correlates PCE and EC, it seems that there are other factors that affect consumer purchase decision process for ecologically conscious products and services and will prove to be fruitful areas for future research. These areas include *“message believability; consumer confusion over green advertising; and the relative impact of price, convenience, quality, and value on the purchase decision process for green products and services”* (Roberts 1996b).

The major contributions of this study was the investigation of selected attitudinal correlates of ECCB. The increase in media coverage of environmental deterioration, both locally and globally; the influx of “environmentally compatible” products in the marketplace; and the integration of ecological issues into both our educational and political systems suggest that the traditional profile of the ecologically conscious consumer needs to be understood better in the Indian context. All of these developments have no doubt sensitized the Indian public to the plight of the environment and call for a better understanding of what predicts ECCB and to what extent. Future studies need to couple demographic as well as more attitudinal correlates to answer this question better.

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