

Demographic and Attitudinal Variables as Determinants of Consumers' Green Purchase Behaviour in the Region of Punjab

Pawanpreet Grewal* and Anju Puri**

* School of Management Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala

** School of Management Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala

Abstract

Consumer behaviour refers to the actions of consumers in the marketplace and the underlying motives for those actions. There has been a growing awareness of the fragility of the environment. There is something that all of the following have in common : driving a hybrid car; eating organic or local food; building with certified sustainably-produced wood; using non-chemical house cleaning products; investing in ethical stock portfolios; recycling aluminium cans and glass bottles; and purchasing energy efficient washing machines, refrigerators, and light bulbs. At a general level, these are different forms and means of green consumerism. Whole world is identifying the need of the Green or Environmental or Ecological consumer behaviour which gives the same meaning to the research area. The consideration for environment could come only from well-informed citizens who are aware of, and fully committed to their rights to a quality health and environment. So there is a widening gap between environmental awareness, attitudes and perception against environmental-friendly behaviour. An attempt has been made to study the demographical and attitudinal variables among consumers of educationally progressive and educationally backward districts of Punjab for environmentally responsible behaviour with a sample size of 600 respondents based on stratified random sampling technique. Further, collected data is analysed by calculating mean score, standard deviation, chi-square and t-values. And the results reveal that though educationally backward districts have higher positive environmental attitude but educationally progressive districts are exhibiting higher green purchase behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid economic growth in the past years have witnessed increasing consumers' consumption worldwide causing environmental deterioration through over-consumption and utilization of natural resources (Chen & Chai, 2010). Shrinking natural resources, overwhelmed landfill sites, pollution, the depletion of the ozone layer, and the greenhouse effect are challenging human existence. Not surprisingly, some surveys show that people's attitudes reveal quite a bit of environmental concern, suggesting that a general environmentalist attitude is becoming more and more prevalent (e. g., Kempton, Boster, & Hartley, 1995). Unfortunately, the relation between environmental attitude and ecological behaviour appears to be, at best, moderate across different studies (Hines, Hungerford, & Tomera, 1986; Schultz, Oskamp, & Mainieri, 1995). Strictly speaking, a person's ecological behaviour often does not match his or her attitudinal intentions (Maloney & Ward, 1973).

As such, shift towards more sustainable consumption patterns is required and it is important to increase people's environmental awareness and consciousness. People, as consumers, can reduce their impact on environment and make a positive difference through their purchasing decisions. The belief is that the consumer's demographical factors and their attitude towards environment are the determinants of their "green buying" behaviour i.e., buying and consuming products that are environmentally beneficial (Mainieri *et al.*, 1997).

Consumers can reduce their impact on environment and make a difference through their purchasing decisions. The rising number of consumers who prefer and are willing to buy eco-friendly products are creating opportunity for businesses that are using "eco-friendly" or "environmentally-friendly" as a component of their value proposition. Today, environmental or green marketing, a strategic marketing approach is a recent focus in business endeavours (Ottman, 1998). Increasing focus on environmental issues can be seen as an indication that pro-environmental concerns have emerged as a potential strategic concern for businesses (Polonsky & Kilbourne, 2005; Menon & Menon, 1997). With an increase in the social and political pressures, profit-driven firms embraced green marketing strategies and exploited these environmental issues as a source of competitive advantage (Chen & Chai, 2010). The businesses were motivated to adopt the concept of green marketing provided that consumers demonstrate a high degree of environmental concern and hence translate this into environmental friendly purchasing commitment.

Consumers' growing concern for the environment and environment related

issues are driving businesses across the globe to offer a wide range of eco-friendly products choices across a wide variety of product categories: from fashion, cars to gadgets. Consumers who are concerned with the environment and are knowledgeable about the environmental issues when shopping try to purchase only eco-friendly products (Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaro-Farleo, 2001). Increasing pro-environmental concerns and awareness of eco-friendly products among consumers have resulted in their green buying behaviour. Recent increase in the number of individuals who are willing to pay more for the eco-friendly suggests that the market for eco-friendly products is ever expanding (Laroche *et al.*, 2001).

India, one of the world's fastest growing economies, is also trying to become a green economy, which can also be seen in a survey by Gallup 2011 which showed that 45% Indians put environmental protection ahead of economic growth which is favoured by 35%. As per the consumer choice and the environment worldwide tracking survey, consumers in India and Brazil have the highest score for environmentally sustainable consumption (Greendex, 2008). Further, the survey pointed out that the top-scoring consumers of 2010 are in the developing economies of India, Brazil, China, and Mexico, in descending order and also the consumers registering the largest 2010 versus 2008 increase in environmentally sustainable consumer behaviour are the Indians, Russians and Americans. Environmentally sustainable behaviour among average consumers in India, China, Mexico, Russia, Hungary, Japan, Great Britain and Canada has increased steadily each year (Greendex, 2010). Thus, the awareness towards green products is quite visible in India in general and not only in metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai but also in other cities and states including Punjab. The growing markets and high per capita income of Punjab has led to green products markets also and going green is the potential way for healthful sustainability.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Demographics and Green Purchase Behaviour

A number of past studies have analyzed relationship between demographic variables and attitudes/consumptions of ecologically aware consumers. Such variables, if significant in terms of statistics, offer easy and efficient ways to segment the market and capitalize on green attitudes and behaviours for marketers. A survey on 235 students in order to determine green consumer behaviours in the new century suggested psychographics appear to be more effective than demographics in explaining variation in college students' ecological aware consumer

behaviour. A person's belief that individuals can play an important role in fighting against environmental destruction is likely to be the driving force behind ecologically aware consumer behaviour. This relationship was held across samples of adult consumers and with college students in the present study, suggesting a stable green consumer profile. Although liberalism was found to be a significant correlate of ecologically aware consumer behaviour, it appears that this type of behaviour transcends ideological boundaries. Altruism was also found to play a role, albeit a secondary one, in explaining ecologically aware consumer behaviour (Straughan and James, 1999: 559-575).

Diamantolopoulos *et al.* (2003) conducted a study on 1697 questionnaires in Britain. According to this study, demographic variables were found insufficient to determine green consumer profile. However, again according to this study women are more related to the environment and women display pro environmental behaviours. Married couples are more likely to have pro environmental behaviour. There is a negative correlation between age and pro environment attitude. There is a positive correlation between education, information and attitudes and behaviour.

Tilikidou *et al.* (2008) conducted a survey in Greece with 420 household and concluded that citizens who more frequently adopt pro-environmental non-purchasing behaviours are all highly educated people. These citizens are not many, neither strongly engaged in most of these behaviours. Recycling behaviour is better predicted by recycling attitudes, while post-purchasing behaviour and ecological activities are better predicted by the other behaviours. Consumers who are mostly involved in recycling and non-energetic, rather traditional activities are mostly influenced by their positive attitudes towards recycling as well as by their social responsibility.

Attitude and Green Purchase Behaviour

A lot of customers show amplified environmental awareness and inclination for environmentally-friendly businesses and their products, unveiling their keenness to purchase and pay more for green products/services (Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007; Vandermerwe and Oliff, 1990). Recently, Athens Laboratory of Research in Marketing in collaboration with the Centre of Sustainability has done a research about the green marketing and revealed above ninety-two per cent of customers has a favourable attitude concerning the businesses that are susceptible to ecological issues (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2009). Besides, environmentally concerned people who believe that pollution is a problem and also have a favourable attitude toward greening environment are more inclined to purchase green products. Hence,

as people become aware of environmental problems, their attitudes and purchase intentions may in turn change. Because, a high price of green product is an indicator of environmental performance, and less polluting products are more costly to produce (Mahenc, 2008).

However, because of increase in environmental concerns consumers are willing to pay little more for green products. Furthermore, a survey indicated that consumers are ready to pay from 7 to 20% additional for green products (Reitman, 1992). Besides, Bhate and Lawle (1997) indicated that a larger number of people have considered the prices of the green products higher than others; however, even though they are ready to buy these green products. Contrary to these findings, D'Souza *et al.*, (2006) reported that generally perception of green products is negatively associated with customer's intention to purchase them if they are of higher prices and low quality in comparison to traditional products.

Consequently, it may be argued that there is an expectation on the part of customers that all products offered should be environmentally safe without a need to sacrifice quality. Hence, as far as the product quality is concerned, green consumers will not compromise on it, so businesses must enhance green product quality as well as focus on environmental benefits of a product, and share these aspects with customers in order to achieve the recognition in the market (D'Souza., Taghian & Lamb, 2006). Schlegelmilch., Bohlen and Diamantopoulos (1996) recommended that those organizations aiming to enhance market penetration of the existing green products offerings must launch an advertising campaign directed at increasing concern about environmental quality in the consumer base.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The researchers in green marketing area primarily focus on examining green consumers' demographic profile. While there is significant knowledge that such studies have produced, an important research gap in Indian context has emerged, by not assessing any predictive relationship that may govern green buying behaviour in the process of adoption of eco-friendly products. The previous researches have not highlighted the predictive relationship of pro-environmental concern to green buying behaviour in Indian context.

This study attempts to find out if consumers' demographical factors and attitude towards environment-related issues impact their buying behaviour to prefer and buy eco-friendly products and pay a premium price for such products.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study, by analyzing the impact of environmental attitude and demographical features of consumers on purchase behaviour of consumers, is to determine whether there is a significant relationship between them and if there is, to reveal direction and level of this relationship and hence, to give advice to companies producing environment-friendly products. The objectives of the study are :-

1. To analyse the consumers' attitude towards building green purchase behaviour.
2. To know and compare the impact of demographical variables on green purchase behaviour among people in educationally backward and educationally progressive districts of Punjab.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The target population of the survey was restricted to a few districts of Punjab and were surveyed based on stratified random sampling. A total of 600 respondents were surveyed from Hoshiarpur, Shahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar, Muktsar and Mansa of which 150 respondents from each district were considered for study, where former districts being educationally progressive districts with highest literacy rate (85.4% and 84.9% respectively) and latter being educationally backward districts with least literacy rate (66.8% and 62.8% respectively) (Census, 2011). For each area randomly respondents were selected for study with age of 18 years and above.

The self-prepared questionnaire comprising two parts; first part including the demographic details of population and second part to measure respondents' attitude to specified attributes was used.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data thus collected from the questionnaires were analysed by using mean scores, standard deviations, chi-square and t-test. The attributes underlying various dimensions were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and the 38 attributes were analysed to determine their relevance in conceptualizing the green behaviour.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

1. Demographical Variables

Table 1 shows the respondents' demographic profile. In this study, most of the respondents were males in both educationally progressive districts (61.33%) and educationally backward districts (52%) as compared to females. The majority of the respondents were married in both the educationally

Table 1
Demographic Profile I of Respondents (N = 600)

Demographic Variable I		Educationally Progressive Districts N=300	Educationally Backward Districts N=300	Degree of Freedom	Chi-Square Statistic
		Respondents (in %age)	Respondents (in %age)		
Gender	Male	61.33	52	1	5.32*
	Female	38.67	48		
Age (years)	18-35	29.33	30.67	3	3.57
	36-45	30	35.33		
	46-65	34	27.33		
	>65	6.67	6.67		
Marital Status	Single	8	6	2	0.92
	Married	90.66	92		
	Others	1.33	2		
No. of Children	No children	10	10.67	3	14.05*
	One	21.33	25.33		
	Two	40	48.00		
	Three or More	28.67	16.00		
Employment	Public Sector	22.67	16	4	5.4
	Private Sector	24.67	26.67		
	Homemaker	16.67	21.33		
	Self-Employed	32	32		
	Unemployed	4	4		

* Note : chi-square value : $p < 0.05$ is significant

progressive (90.66%) and educationally backward districts (92%). Most of the respondents aged between 46-65 years (34%) in educationally progressive districts whereas in educationally backward districts most of the respondents belonged to age 36-45 years (35.33%). About 40% and 48% of the respondents were having two children in educationally progressive and educationally backward districts respectively. Further, it is derived that demographic factors of gender (5.32) and number of children (14.05%) showed significant chi-square value indicating both variables to be significant predictors of the consumers' green purchase behaviour.

Further, Table 2 depicts the education and income level of the respondents which indicate that majority of the population in educationally progressive districts and educationally backward districts is graduate (43.34% and 44% respectively) and with income level Rs 5 Lacs and above. Further, education and income level show significant difference among both the populations with 2.19 and 8.34 t-value.

Table 2
Demographic Profile II of Respondents (N= 600)

Demographic Variable II		Educationally Progressive Districts N=300 Respondents (in %age)	Educationally Backward Districts N=300 Respondents (in %age)	t-value
Educational Level	Illiterate	0	2.67	2.19*
	Primary	0	1	
	Matriculate	11.33	18	
	Sr. Secondary	29.33	28	
	Graduate	43.34	44	
	Postgraduate	16	6.33	
Income (Rs./Annum)	<1 lac	0	1.33	8.34**
	1 lac-2.5 lac	6	16.67	
	2.5 lac-5 lac	26.67	27.33	
	> = 5 lac	67.33	54.67	
Average Income		1062667	474000	

* Note : t-value : (two tail test) $p < 0.05$ is significant

** Note : t-value : (two tail test) $p < 0.05$ is significant

Also, regression analysis was carried out on demographic variables of both the populations and the statistical significant levels are shown in Table 3. Based on statistical significant coefficients, age (3.52 in educationally progressive districts) and education (2.04 in educationally progressive, 5.08 in educationally backward districts) happen to be impacting positively and significantly the attitude of respondents towards green products. The respondents who have higher education level have more intention to purchase green products such that in educationally progressive districts respondents with higher educational level tend to purchase 0.188 times more than respondents with lower educational level. Similarly, respondents in educationally backward districts with higher educational level tend to purchase 1.0 times more than respondents with lower educational level. Also, respondents in educationally progressive districts belonging to higher age group tend to exhibit more green purchase behaviour, i.e 0.893 times,

Table 3
Impact of Demographic Variables on the Attitude of Respondents Towards Green Products : Regression Analysis

Variable	Educationally Progressive Districts N=300				Educationally Backward Districts N=300			
	1st run Model		Final run Model		1st run Model		Final run Model	
	β	t-value	β	t-value	β	t-value	β	t-value
Constant	64.679	30.61**	66.868	49.13**	72.513	16.22**	69.048	21.65**
Gender : M=2; F = 1	-0.697	1.68	-0.791	1.96*	-2.754	3.23**	-2.561	3.14**
Age	0.879	3.45**	0.893	3.52**	0.406	1.74		
Marital Status : M=2; S=1	1.004	1.11			-1.803	0.90		
No. of Children	-1.053	3.58**	-0.856	3.42**	-0.226	0.39		
Education	0.158	1.53	0.188	2.04*	0.971	4.84**	1.000	5.08**
Family Income	0.235	0.66			-0.846	1.58/	-0.886	1.97*

* Note : t-value : (two tail test) $p < 0.05$ is significant

* Note : t-value : (two tail test) $p < 0.05$ is significant

than respondents in lower age group. The variables of gender (1.96 in educationally progressive, 3.14 in educationally backward districts), number of children (3.42 in educationally progressive districts) and family income (1.97 in educationally backward districts) though significant but impact negatively on the respondents towards green products whereas marital status demographic variable does not impacts the attitude of respondents towards green products. In educationally progressive districts, females tend to purchase green products 0.791 times more than males. Also females belonging to educationally backward districts show green purchase behaviour 2.561 times more than males of the same region. Size of the family also impacts the green purchase behaviour as when the number of children in family increases their purchase lowers 0.856 times than those with smaller families, seen in educationally progressive districts. Following similar trend the increase in income level causes 0.886 times lower purchase in educationally backward districts.

2. Attitudinal Variables

Furthermore, the respondents were assessed on various dimensions affecting the green purchase behaviour. Various attributes were defined which have been enlisted in Table 4.

Analysing the statements on attitude towards green products across educationally progressive and educationally backward districts of Punjab it was found that there is significant difference in the attitude (5.57) of both the regions. Table 5 depicts that educationally backward districts exhibit higher attitude than educationally progressive districts.

When we consider the attribute of compromise with the environmental value while going for purchase of domestic products i.e. attribute S10 both the regions' respondents agree to that they never compromise with environmental values. Also, there is no significant difference in both the regions regarding the view that there is nothing that average citizen can do to help stop environmental pollution i.e. attribute S12. Further, when we compare the attributes of green purchase behaviour, it is analysed that there is no significant difference in their purchase behaviour.

Table 4
Enlisting Attributes for Attitude Towards Green Products and Green Purchase Behaviour

Dimension	Attribute	Statement
Attitude Towards Green Products	S1	Green Products are valuable to society
	S2	I agree that the price of eco-friendly products is supposed to be higher
	S3	I am ready to pay more price of eco-friendly products
	S4	I will prefer promotion campaign that protect environment
	S5	I will prefer those places / distribution channels which are not cause to environment pollution
	S6	I trust the quality of eco-friendly products
	S7	I will buy eco-friendly products which are lower in quality in comparison to alternative products
	S8	Biodegradable products are useful to the society
	S9	I will purchase recycled products even they are more expensive
	S10	I never compromise with the environmental value when I go for purchase of domestic products
	S11	I do not purchase products that are known to cause environmental pollution
	S12	There is nothing that average citizen can do to help stop environmental pollution
	S13	My involvement with ecofriendly products will help save the environment for future generation.
Consumer Purchase Behaviour	S14	I understand what green products are but have never considered buying them.
	S15	I have considered buying green products but have never actually bought them.
	S16	I used to buy green products earlier, but have NOT bought them recently.
	S17	Some of the products I currently buy are green.
	S18	Most of the products I currently buy are green.
	S19	I don't talk to peer about my purchases.
	S20	I like introducing and creating awareness about green products I purchase.

Table 5
Mean, S.D. and t-value of Educationally Progressive Districts (N = 300) and Educationally Backward Districts (N = 300) on Attitudinal Variables

Dimension	Attribute	Educationally Progressive Districts N=300		Educationally Backward Districts N=300		t-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
		Attitude Towards Green Products	S1	3.53	0.65	
	S2	2.42	0.61	2.85	0.92	6.75**
	S3	2.61	0.50	2.77	0.79	2.96**
	S4	3.20	0.72	3.69	0.79	7.94**
	S5	3.08	0.65	3.59	0.84	8.32**
	S6	3.23	0.67	3.63	0.70	7.15**
	S7	2.69	0.56	2.80	0.75	2.04*
	S8	2.83	0.75	3.25	0.91	6.17**
	S9	2.59	0.53	2.72	0.73	2.50*
	S10	3.71	0.51	3.71	0.62	NA
	S11	2.99	0.55	3.43	0.76	8.12**
	S12	2.66	1.18	2.81	1.05	1.65
	S13	3.55	0.63	3.94	0.64	7.52**
Average		3.01	0.64	3.32	0.72	5.57**
Consumer Purchase Behaviour	S14	3.05	0.81	2.81	0.86	3.52**
	S15	3.01	0.76	2.91	0.89	1.48
	S16	3.32	0.75	2.99	0.96	4.69**
	S17	2.87	0.81	2.91	0.88	0.58
	S18	2.88	0.80	2.80	0.80	1.23
	S19	3.14	0.77	2.96	0.84	2.74**
	S20	3.15	0.63	3.53	0.70	6.99**
Average		3.06	0.72	2.99	0.83	1.10

* Note: t-value: (two-tail test) $p < 0.05$ is significant

** Note: t-value: (two-tail test) $p < 0.01$ is significant

SUGGESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The study suggests that demographical and attitudinal variables are likely predictors of green purchase behaviour. This creates an opportunity for developing green market focusing on more educated consumers-the same proposition that has worked in the West. Also, consumers want eco-friendly products from green firms or companies which project their image as being green. The right mix of eco- friendly products and service, price, quality, promotion and marketing expertise is needed to target and attract the consumers who may be willing to buy eco- friendly products. Green marketers should identify such segment of consumers and accordingly design and market products. Findings from this work also suggest that the segment of consumers willing to pay more for eco-friendly products in India may not be very large. Even in an educated segment like the one chosen for this study, willing to pay premium receives an underwhelming response. Awareness among consumers that their buying choices can make a difference to the environment should be promoted as increased consumer demand will help reduce costs in production of eco-friendly products.

The present research was conducted using a self-reporting questionnaire and hence respondents' bias may be a concern, especially with regard to the willingness to pay premium. Also the use of closed questions made it impossible to explore certain issues in greater depths and investigate. Although the list of demographic variables used in this study is quite extensive and diverse, it would be useful if other unexplored factors pertaining to consumer behaviour, such as personality traits, emotional intelligence, and preference for consistency, are considered as potential drivers of an environmentally-friendly attitude.

CONCLUSION

Consumers, by not remaining insensitive to environmental problems such as environment pollution and global warming, they have started to consider whether the products they purchase are environment-friendly or not apart from price and quality features of the products. The study reveals age and education to be significant demographic variables that affect attitude of green products and females being more environmental responsive in their behaviour than males. While comparing educationally backward and educationally progressive districts it was found that educationally backward districts exhibit higher attitude towards green products whereas no significant difference was found in their green purchase behaviour.

With environment and environmental problems gaining importance for people, companies have started to change their production, goods or service generation, and hence companies have started to produce environment-friendly products and have tried to reach 'Green Marketing' concept to the consumers.

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