YOUNG CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION OF ORGANIC PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

Ethical products take social justice and the environment into consideration. The study investigated the predictors of the purchase intention of organic personal care products (OPCP) by young consumers in South Africa by extending the TPB. Two personal factors (moral norms and ethical self-identity) were added as predictors of purchase intention. The study adopted the quantitative research design and the cross-sectional survey method was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics and structural equation modelling (PLS SEM) were used for data analysis. The findings indicated significant positive relationships between attitude, perceived behavioural control, moral norms and ethical self-identity and the purchase intention of OPCP. Recommendations to help businesses to promote the purchase of OPCP are suggested.

Keywords: Organic Personal Care Products, Young Consumers, Purchase Intention, Personal Factors, Theory of Planned Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Kuswah et al. (2019) point out that ethical consumerism which can be described as consumer activism that focuses on the production and consumption of products based on social and environmental concerns has changed in scale and scope during the last few decades. Ethical consumption includes social justice, human rights, fair trade, fair wages, self-interested health concerns and environmental issues and at times boycott of goods and companies (Hwang, 2016). Ethical consumerism has broadened from the cultural fringes to the mainstream of society motivated by a growing number of consumers that are concerned about the ethicality and effect of their consumption on animals, labour, society and the environment. Many products now bear the marks of initiatives that support ethical production and consumption such as Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance and many businesses emphasise ethical factors as a crucial branding strategy (Carrington et al., 2014; Yu & Lee, 2019). Ethical products are often termed as organic products and are characterised by factors such as little or no use of harmful modified ingredients and consideration for environment, safety, health and human rights. The main types of organic products are organic food, organic clothing and organic personal care (Kavaliauske & Ubartait, 2014). Organic personal care products (OPCP) include skin care, hair care, colour cosmetics, deodorants, toiletries and hygiene products. OPCP are made from agricultural ingredients which are grown without the use of pesticides and synthetic or genetically modified organisms (Ghazali et al., 2017). Compared to developed countries, the organic product concept is fairly new and market penetration is still at the nascent stage in most developing countries. However, developing markets such as South Africa present a good opportunity for brands and retailers selling OPCP (Coresight Research, 2018).

The Theory of Planed Behaviour (TPB) is the most widely used model to predict ethical consumption behaviour especially in the area of organic products (Yadav & Pathak, 2016;

Ghazali et al., 2017). The TPB by Ajzen's (1991) postulates that that the purchasing intentions of consumers are determined by attitude, perceived behavioural control and subjective norms. The TPB is open to modification and can be deepened and broadened by the addition of new variables or changing the path of existing variables (Ajzen, 1991; Yadav & Pathak, 2016). This study aims to understand young consumers' intention to purchase OPCP in South Africa by adopting the TPB. The TPB will be modified by the addition of two personal factors (moral norms and ethical self-identity) as predictors of purchase intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) extends the Theory of Reasoned Action by (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and argues that the performance of a specific behaviour by an individual is determined by intention which depends on attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Attitude towards behaviour measures the degree to which an individual has a favourable or an unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour being measured. Subjective norms describe an individual's feelings of social pressure from other people or group and measure the likelihood that important individuals or groups will like or dislike the performance of certain behaviour. Perceived behavioural control can be described as the perceived difficulty or ease of conducting a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Attitude and OPCP purchase intention

Empirical studies by Van-Loo et al. (2013) and Yadav & Pathak (2016) find a significant positive relationship between attitude and the purchase intention of organic food. Beldad & Hegner (2018) find that attitude influences the intention to purchase fair trade products by Dutch consumers. There is a positive relationship between attitude and intention to re-purchase organic personal care products by Malaysian consumers (Ghazali et al., 2017). A more favorable attitude by an individual should lead to a stronger intention to purchase OPCP. Consequently, it is hypothesised that:

H1 There is a positive relationship between attitude and OPCP purchase intention.

Subjective Norms (SNs) and OPCP purchase intention

Prior empirical studies by Smith & Paladino (2010) and Al-Swidi et al., 2014) find that SNs are a predictor of intention to purchase organic food while Kim & Chung (2011) report that SNs positively affect the intention to purchase organic body lotion. Beldad & Hegner (2018) reveal a significant positive relationship between SNs and the intention to purchase fair trade products by Dutch consumers. However, Ghazali et al. (2017) did not find a significant relationship between SNs and repurchase intention of OPCP by Malaysian consumers. The opinions of an important person or group may influence the intention of an individual to purchase OPCP. It is hypothesized that:

H2 There is a positive relationship between SNs and OPCP purchase intention.

Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) and OPCP purchase intention

Gracia & De-Magistris (2008) and Kim & Chung (2011) find a significant positive relationship between PBC and purchase intention of organic products. Beldad & Hegner (2018) reveal a significant positive relationship between PBC and the intention to purchase fair trade product by female consumers but the relationship is insignificant for male consumers. Ghazali et al. (2017) find a significant relationship between PBC and repurchase intention of OPCP in Malaysia. High degree of control by an individual will lead to a strong intention to purchase and if consumers think they have the resources, knowledge and skill to use OPCP, they will be more willing to purchase them. It is hypothesised that:

H3 There is a positive relationship between PBC and OPCP purchase intention.

Moral norms and purchase intention

Moral norms can be described as the perceived moral obligation or responsibility to perform or not to perform certain task and represent an individual's belief that acting in a certain way is essentially right or wrong. Empirical studies have criticised the TPB because of its failure to include the effect of moral norms on behaviour. The inclusion of moral norms in the TPB improves the explanatory power of the model. Moral norms play an important role in situations where there is a conflict between individual and social gain. Therefore, moral norms can be significant in the purchase of organic products because individuals concern for themselves, environment and society (Arvola et al., 2008; Beldad & Hegner, 2018). Consequently, it is hypothesised that:

H4 There is a positive relationship between moral norms and OPCP purchase intention.

Ethical self-identity and purchase intention

Self-identity can be defined as the meanings associated with the specific roles that individuals have in society and the distinctive ways in which they perceive themselves in those roles (Tung et al, 2017). Self-identity is one of the constructs that can explain human behaviour and can be used to extend the TPB (Gatersleben et al., 2014). Ethical self-identity (ESI) depicts the way that ethical issues influence the consumption practices of individuals and thus socially responsible business practices (Hwang, 2016). Carfora et al. (2017) find that ESI is a predictor of purchase intention of organic food while Beldad & Hegner (2018) report that ESI is a significant factor in the purchase intention of fair trade products. This suggests that individuals with a stronger ESI should have a stronger intention to purchase ethical products. It is hypothesised

H5 that there is a significant positive relationship between consumers' ESI and purchase intention of OPCP.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study followed the quantitative research design and the cross-sectional survey approach was used to collect data from the respondents. The participants in the survey were final year undergraduate students of the Departments of Business Management of three public universities located in the Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa. The participants were conveniently sampled and the self-administered questionnaire method was used to collect data. Prior empirical studies on young customers (Choudhury & Dey, 2014; Jhanji & Sarin, 2018) also focused on university students. Questionnaires were distributed in class with the assistance of lecturers. The questionnaire was pre-tested with twenty students in a pilot study. Descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modelling (PLS SEM) was used for analysis. The questionnaire items were based on the five point Likert Scale with *"1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree"* and adapted from previous studies (Ghazali et al., 2017; Wang, et al., 2019).

RESULTS

Response Rate and Biographical Details

Four hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed and four hundred and twelve questionnaires were returned and found unusable. The gender composition of the respondents was two hundred and twenty-one females and one hundred and ninety-one males. All the respondents were between 20 and 30 years.

Structural Equation Modelling

The evaluation of the measurement model

Table 1
THE MEASUREMENT MODEL

Construct	Measurement items	Item loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Attitude (A) Mean 4.20 SD1.14	A1 I think that purchasing organic personal care product would be a good idea	0.873	0.736	0.900	0.643
	A2 I think that purchasing organic personal care product would be desirable	0.809			
	A3 I think that purchasing organic personal care product would be beneficial	0.782			
	A4 I think that purchasing organic personal care product would be wise	0.736			
	A5 I think that purchasing organic personal care product would be pleasant	0.801			

Subjective norms (SN) Mean 2.75 SD 1.03	SN 1 Most people that I value would buy organic personal care products	0.836	0.812	0.864	0.615
	SN2 My family thinks that I should buy organic personal care products	0.829			
	SN3 Most friends whose opinions regarding personal care products are important to me think that I should buy organic personal care products	0.741			
	SN 4 If I buy organic personal care products, this can influence other people to buy organic personal care products	0.725			
	SN5 deleted People that I value such as my teacher think that I should buy organic personal care products	0.412			
Perceived behavioural control (PBC) Mean 3.85 SD 1.06	PBC1 It is easy for me to buy organic personal care products	0.839	0.809	0.839	0.635
	PBC2 If I wanted to, I could buy organic personal care products	0.802			
	PBC3 It is mostly up to me whether or not to buy organic personal care products	0.746			
Ethical self-identity (ESI) Mean 4.15 SD 1.13	ESI 1 I think of myself as an ethical consumer.	0.838	0.746	0.843	0.643
	ESI2 I think of myself as a person who is interested in ethical consumption	0.816			
	ESI 3 I think of myself as someone who is very concerned with ethical issues.	0.748			
Moral norms Mean 4.10 SD 1.11	Purchasing OPCP rather than conventional products would make me: MN1Feel like making a personal contribution to something better	0.814	0.760	0.832	0.624
	MN 2 Feel like doing something right	0.752			
	MN 3 Feel like performing my moral duty	0.801			
Purchase intention	PI1 I am willing to buy organic personal	0.825	0.806	0.850	0.654

(PI) Mean 3.68 SD 1.05	care products				
	PI2 I plan to organic personal care products.	0.779			
	P13 I intend to buy organic personal care products	0.821			

Table 2
DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7	Column 8	Column 9	Column 10
Construct	**PI**	**A**	**SN**	**PBC**	**HV**	**EV**	**AV**	**ESI**	**MN**
P1	0.809								
A	0.706	0.802							
SN	0.722	0.684	0.784						
PBC	0.306	0.469	0.501	0.797					
ESI	0.701	0.708	0.699	0.767	0.736	0.701	0.728	0.802	
MN	0.604	0.629	0.582	0.615	0.648	0.597	0.692	0.701	0.790

Diagonals in Bold Signify the Square Root of the AVE while the other Figures Depict the Correlations

Table 1 showed that all items used to measure the constructs of the study had loadings above 0.708 except for one item under subjective norms which was deleted. The composite reliability values for the constructs ranged between 0.832 and 0.900. In addition, the Cronbach alphas for the entire construct range between 0.736 and 0.812 indicating a satisfactory internal consistency of measures. This implies an acceptable level of construct validity. The AVEs ranged between 0.615 and 0.654 suggesting a good convergent validity of the scales. The Fornell & Larcker test was used to assess discriminant validity. The results as depicted by Table 2 showed that the square roots of AVEs are depicted on the diagonals and are all greater than the corresponding correlation coefficients within the constructs. It can be concluded that the measurement model is satisfactory.

Structural Model Assessment

The assessment of the structural model was done using the procedures suggested by Hair et al. (2019). The summary results of the path coefficients and T-statistics are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3
PATH COEFFICIENT AND T-STATISTICS

Hypothesised Path	Beta	Standard Error	T-Value	Decision
H1 A→PI	0.528	0.061	7.395*	Accepted
H2 SN→ PI	0.092	0.053	1.003	Rejected
H3 PBC→PI	0.196	0.059	3.994**	Accepted
H4 MN → PI	0.135	0.062	3.366*	Accepted
H5 ESI → PI	0.224	0.051	4.105**	Accepted

*p<0.01; **p<0.05;

Hypothesis one proposes that attitude is positively related to purchase intention (PI). The results (β=0.528, T=7,395 p<0.001) show a significant positive relationship between attitude (A) and PI. Hypothesis one is accepted. Hypothesis two proposes that subjective norms (SN) is positively related to PI. The results (β=0.092 T=1.003, p>0.005) depict an insignificant relationship between SN and PI. Hypothesis two is rejected. Hypothesis three proposes that perceived behavioural control (PBC) is positively related to PI. The results (β=0.196 T=3.994, p<0.05) show a significant relationship between PBC and PI. Hypothesis three is accepted. Hypothesis four proposes that there is a significant positive relationship between moral norms (MN) and PI. The results (β=0.135, T=3.366, p<0.01) support a significant positive relationship between MN and PI. Hypothesis four is accepted. Hypothesis five proposes that there is a significant positive relationship between ethical self-identity (ESI) and PI. The results (β=0.224, T=4.105, p<0.05) support a significant negative relationship between ESI and PI. Hypothesis eight is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The study examined the determinants of purchase intention of organic personal care products (OPCP) by young consumers in South Africa by extending the TPB. The findings of the study indicated a significant positive relationship between attitude and purchase intention of OPCP by young customers. This suggests that young consumers with positive attitude are more likely to buy OPCP. The findings are consistent with the results of previous empirical studies. Van-Loo et al. (2013) and Yadav & Pathak 2016) find a significant positive relationship between attitude and the purchase of organic food. The findings showed that subjective norms (SNs) do not have a significant impact on the intention to purchase OPCP. The findings are consistent with Ghazali et al. (2017) that SNs do not significantly affect the re-repurchase intention of OPCP in Malaysia. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between perceived behavioural control (PBC) and purchase intention. The findings are consistent with prior empirical results. Gracia & De-Magistris (2008) and Kim & Chung (2011) find a significant positive relationship between PBC and purchase intention of organic products. The findings of the study support a significant positive relationship between moral norms and purchase intention of OPCP. Arvola et al. (2008) and Beldad & Hegner (2018) find that moral norms are positively related with the purchase of organic products. The results of the study showed a significant positive relationship

between ethical self-identity and purchase intention of OPCP. Beldad & Hegner (2018) find that ESI is a significant factor in the purchase intention of fair trade products.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicated significant positive relationships between attitude and perceived behavioural control and purchase intention of OPCP. Both moral norms and ethical self-identity positively affect the purchase intention of OPCP. The study has some practical implications and the findings of the study can assist businesses to better comprehend how to promote OPCP. Manufacturers and retailers of OPCP should create awareness and enhance the knowledge of the benefits of the products. This can be through the media. Print, electronic and social media and road shows can help to create awareness about the benefits of OPCP. Retailers can also improve the affordability of OPCP through marketing strategies such as discounts. In addition, the sale of OPCP by retailers through electronic and mobile commerce platforms will encourage behavioural control by young consumers. The study has some limitations. Data was collected from only three universities and this limits the generalisability of the findings of this study. The study investigated purchase intention and not actual purchase of OPCP. Despite the fact that intention predicts behaviour, other studies can investigate the determinants of actual purchase behaviour.

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