GEN Z AND GREEN PURCHASE INTENTION

Rashmita Saran, the ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education
Rachita Kashyap, the ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education
Sweta Singh, the ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education

ABSTRACT

The rapid development of the economy and technology has made human life easier and more comfortable, but it has also brought several dangers to the universe. consumerism is one of the dangers that is expanding at an alarming rate. The detrimental effects of consumerism on the environment also act as a catalyst for accelerating green consumption behaviour.\\r\\nHowever, consumers favour the idea of green consumption, but their actual purchase behaviour varies. In light of this context, this study explores the role of environmental awareness, highlighting the hazardous consumerism effects among graduate students, which shapes their intention of green purchase behaviour. Also, this study wants to bring clarity to various distinguishing antecedents of consumersâ€™ preference towards green products.\\r\\nStructural equation modelling was used to examine the proposed hypotheses. A total of 437 undergraduate and graduate student samples were collected, out of which 400 responses were considered for the final study. The finding of the study shows that Environmental Awareness is positively correlated with Environmental Seriousness, Green Purchase Attitude and Green\\r\\nPurchase Intention. Environmental Seriousness is positively correlated with Green Purchase Attitude but is not correlated with Green Purchase Intention, whereas Green Purchase Attitude is positively correlated with Green Purchase Intention hence indicating there is a full mediation effect. This study provides evidence to business practitioners that the young generation who are concerned about the environment will prefer using environmentally friendly products. A personâ€™s actions and efforts are guided by the information they process, weigh, and integrate from a variety of sources about their capabilities and the outcomes of their behaviour. Hence, the study findings guide the practitioner to focus more on providing sustainable offerings to society and create awareness through different marketing activities as the young consumers eventually become the future decision-maker. this study may be the first to isolate the impact of consumersâ€™ beliefs about the significance of green marketing on\\r\\nenvironmentally conscious purchasing decisions. In future, the same connections might be studied in a different setting or geographical area. The moderating effect of gender on green purchase intention can also be studied in the future.

Keywords: Environmental Awareness, Environmental Seriousness, Green Purchase Attitude, Green Purchase Intention.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of the economy and technology has made human life easier and more comfortable, but it has also brought with it new dangers to the entire biosphere in the form of a rise in global temperatures, an increase in pollution on all fronts, and a quickening of the rate at which climate change is occurring. The earth is in danger from the numerous directions in

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which consumerism is expanding at an alarming rate: to the environment, to people's health, to national economies, and to businesses (Sun et al., 2022; Arrow et al., 1996). The detrimental effects of consumerism on environment also act as a catalyst for accelerating the green consumption behavior (Farias, et al. 2021). However, the consumers favor the idea of green consumption, but their actual purchase behavior varies (Prothero et al., 2011; Rosenzweig et al., 2008). In light with this context, research works conducted brought clarity on various distinguishing antecedents of consumers preference towards green products (Barbarossa & De Pelsmacker, 2016; Confente, et al. 2020; Mannetti et al. 2004), role of society and self-concept (Trudel, et al. 2016; Goldstein, et al. 2008) and mindset for sustainability (Luchs et al., 2010). Most of the research works in this area is done in developed nations whereas limited research works were done from developing nations. According to Nazeer, (2016), "the haste of globalization, urbanization and industrialization has led to severe environmental concerns in developing countries". Developing nations also contributes significantly to pollute the environment as they are rapidly moving to catch up the automation and mechanization magnitudes of the developed nations (Wright & Fulton, 2005). Existing research papers focused majorly in two broad categories which includes "theory of reasoned action (TRA) and theory of planned behavior (TPB)", however research works need to amalgamate other behavioral theories separately or in fusion to bring forth the explanations to questions which are not answered yet in different cultural settings (Zheng et al., 2020). In addition to this, there is also an erg to explore and investigate how the perception of severity accelerated by the knowledge level affect the customers green purchase behavior, as "*environmental concern and perceived environmental seriousness resulted from initial ecological learning, which later build a sense of responsibility*" (Zheng et al., 2020). In light of all these void, this study tries to explore the role of environmental awareness which highlights the hazardous consumerism effects among graduate students which shapes their intention of green purchase behavior. Current graduate students also considered as Gen Z and according to (Herman, et al. 2021), " Gen Z is agents of changes who initiate the indifference of issues about environment and business which nowadays both have strong relationship with each other. Gen Z will also be the future decision makers, educators, marketing planners, policy or change makers of the new knowledge, data and e-commerce economy (Kabaday et al., 2015), they also are considered as a very important consumer segment for various marketing offerings and social idea (Kabaday et al., 2015; Sharaf et al., 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Environmental seriousness can be explained as people's emotional propensity and concerns towards environment and also their eagerness to solve the environmental issues (Zheng et al., 2020; Alibeli & Johnson, 2009); Lee, et al. (2008) describe environmental seriousness as an emotional association with environment matters which might be passive at times and active at other times. Consumers who are more serious and concerned towards the environment will act accordingly and will become more ecofriendly (Nekmahmud & Fekete-Farkas, 2020; Zahan, et al. 2020; Aman et al. 2012; Irawan & Darmayanti, 2012; Albayrak et al. 2013). The level of seriousness about environment also emerged from the level of awareness and exposure one does have about the various environmental problems from different platforms such as television, social media, and newspapers and from surroundings (Farias, et al. 2021). Aman et al., (2012) has stated that those consumers who are more alert, aware and concerned about the environment were most likely to experience emotional outburst if they encounter with some environment unfriendly behavior. According to Farias, et al. (2021) "Nevertheless, the continuous talks,

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panels, and exposure from the media on environmental problems such as air pollution, water pollution, and climate change, have captured people's awareness about how serious the environmental problems are, although not everyone is at the same level to understand the degree of seriousness and take action".

Consumers who are aware about the detrimental effects of environmental conditions on humanity are found to develop certain specific favorable thoughts, feelings, emotional and mental states than those consumers who are unaware about the environmental (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2005; Mancha & Yoder 2015). These kinds of thought process in consumers shape their attitude towards consuming more environment friendly offerings. According to Farias, et al. (2021) green attitude can be described as "consumer's certain level of agreement or disagreement, positive or negative thoughts, feelings, states of mind, and interests regarding the likelihood of performing green purchasing". The level of environmental seriousness also shapes ecological attitude in consumers where ecological attitude can be seen as the sum total of opinion towards a particular environmental matter, it can be both favorable and unfavorable (Zheng et al., 2020). To add more to this, Lee, et al. (2008) found that, the same environment concerning thoughts direct the customer to involve in ecological buying behavior and greatly influence the green purchase attitude of consumers towards green, fair and even-handed procurement. Green purchase attitude is also considered as one of the strong predictors which determine consumer's willingness to purchase green products or services in near future (Zhao et al., 2014; Ajzen, 1985). As per Farias et al. (2021) green purchase intentions are the customer's intentions, willingness or plan to purchase a product which is environmentally better in comparison with other standard goods in terms of being environmental friendly, recyclable, etc.". Due to advent and growth in social networking and global reach, consumers are becoming more and more aware about the severity of unsustainable business practices, and hence are more intended to purchase recyclable and biodegradable products. Furthermore, individuals who are aware and serious about the prosperity and protection of biodiversity tend to avoid purchase of products which are harmful to the environment (Mostafa, 2007; Chan, 2001). In addition to this, several studies claimed that green purchase attitude directs the behavior of the individuals (Bashir et al., 2019; Zahan et al., 2020; Uddin & Khan (2016). However, some of the research findings shows disparity in estimating the relation between the individual's ecofriendly attitude and their purchase intention for sustainable offerings (Davis, 1995; Magnusson et al., 2001). According to Hines, et al. (1987) consumers who have favorable attitudes towards consuming ecofriendly products are more likely to participate in ecofriendly behavior.

H_1: *Environmental awareness significantly influences the environmental seriousness.*

H_2: *Environmental awareness significantly influences the green purchase attitude.*

H_3: *Environmental awareness significantly influences the green purchase intention.*

H_4: *Environmental seriousness significantly influences the green purchase attitude.*

H_5: *Environmental seriousness significantly influences the green purchase intention.*

H_6: *Green purchase attitude significantly influence the green purchase intention.*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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Survey method used to examine the proposed hypotheses. To measure environmental awareness construct scale is taken from Uzun and Saglam (2006), to measure the environmental seriousness construct scale is taken from Farias et al., (2021) to measure the green purchase attitude construct and green purchase intention scale were taken from Farias et al., (2021); Yadav & Pathak, (2016) respectively. The questionnaire consists of 7-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 7-strongly agree). All the constructs are first order reflective constructs and are reliable and valid. The undergraduate and graduate students are the sample for the study**.** Convenient sampling method is adopted to collect 437 responses out of which 400 responses were considered for the final study.

The data analysis is divided into several stages. First stage considers the demographic profiling of the sample. Second stage considers an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to recognize the factor structure of the study constructs. Third stage considers the measurement model testing which examine the validity and reliability of individual constructs. Fourth stage considers hypothesis testing by using structural equation modeling.

RESULTS

The sample consists of 53 percent male and 47 percent female respondents. Out of the total sample 53 percent respondents are graduate, 47 percent are undergraduates. The study considers gen Z population having age range from 18 to 25 years. Every respondent undergone through the course called "Environment Studies" in their coursework at least once in their academic career till date. Respondents were chosen from three universities across Hyderabad, India (Icfai foundation for higher studies, Osmania University, JNTU).

Principal component analysis with varimax rotation is used to extract the initial factor structure. Purification of the scale items is also done in this stage.

EFA result shows, the items were loaded in their respected factors and factor loadings of more than 0.5 is considered as a cut off value. Four factors emerged and they are Environmental-Awareness (AW), Environmental - Seriousness (SR), Green – Purchase Attitude (GA) and Green -Purchase Intention (GI).

To check the measurement model SEM is being used by AMOS 20.0. Confirmatory factor analysis is carried out on the first order constructs AW and SR separately and the results indicated good fit for both the models and confirm their uni-dimensionality (For AW: CMIN/df=5.299, GFI=.956, AGFI=.848, CFI=.990, TLI=.988, RMR= .006, IFI=.972, NFI=.988; For SR: CMIN/df=2.672, GFI=.987, AGFI=.961, CFI=.996, TLI=.992, RMR= .007, IFI=.996, NFI=.994). The result indicated good fit (CMIN/df=5.922, RFI=.905, CFI=.939, TLI=.920, RMR= .022, IFI=.939, NFI=.928). All the standardized estimates are significant and more than 0.8. The construct also shows good internal consistency through the composite reliability (more than 0.70) and the average variance extracted value (more than 0.5) which is given in Table 1 (Carmines & Zeller, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The high AVE value and significant standardized estimates (Table 1) indicate nice convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results also show nice discriminant validity of the latent constructs as the inter dimension correlations are less than the AVE values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), the discriminant validity values are AW (0.840), SR (0.804), GA (0.836) and GI (0.798).

Table 1
EFA RESULTS, CR, AVE

Factors	Measurement	Facor Loading	Cronbach-	Variance	CR	AVE

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	Items		alpha value	Explained		
Awareness (AW)	AW4	0.919	0.983	43.577	0.983	0.840
	AW3	.911				
	AW5	.902				
	AW12	.898				
	AW11	.889				
	AW13	.877				
	AW6	.871				
	AW14	.870				
	AW9	.866				
	AW7	.863				
	AW8	.852				
Seriousness (SR)	SR2	.914	0.955	21.343	0.953	.804
	SR4	.913				
	SR3	.876				
	SR5	.848				
	SR1	.840				
(GA)	GA1	.886	.911	8.997	.910	.836
	GA2	.882				
(GI)	GI1	.888	.918	13.007	.922	.798
	GI2	.893				
	GI3	.824				

The fourth phase of data analysis includes testing the structural model. The results indicate acceptable model fit indices (CMIN/*df* = 5.922, *CFI* =.939, *IFI* =.939, *NFI* =.928, RFI= .905, TLI= .920, *RMR* =.022). All the five alternate hypotheses were supported except H5 (refer Figure 1). Environmental Awareness is positively correlated with Environmental Seriousness, Green Purchase Attitude and Green Purchase Intention. Environmental Seriousness is positively correlated with Green Purchase Attitude but is not correlated with Green Purchase Intention; whereas Green Purchase Attitude is positively correlated with Green Purchase Intention hence indicate there is a full mediation effect. Environmental Seriousness construct indirectly influence Green Purchase Intention through Green Purchase Attitude construct.

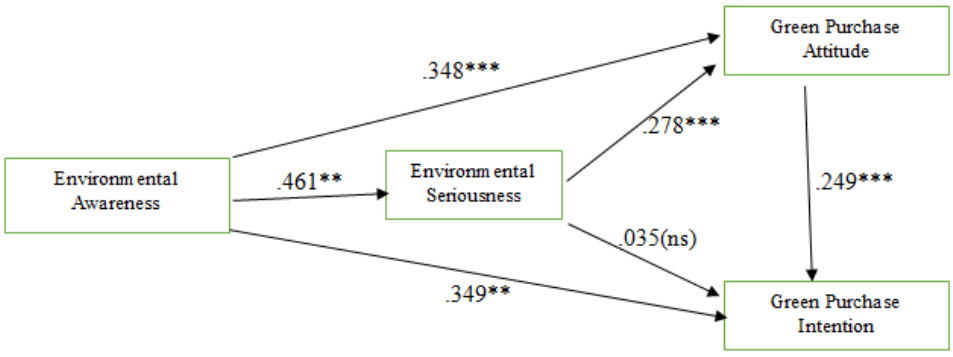

FIGURE 1
STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULT

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Discussion

This study finds that youngsters' attitude and intention to purchase green product is significantly related with their awareness and seriousness about the environment issues. Although a few studies have examined the factors affecting the antecedents of willingness and intentions (Ha & Janda, 2012; Park et al., 2010), this study may be the first to isolate the impact of consumers' beliefs about the significance of green marketing on environmentally conscious purchasing decisions. The connections might be studied in a different setting or geographical area. There is a high correlation between one's green buying mindset and their green purchase intent. This finding is consistent with an argument made by Peattie (2001) green marketers should appeal to individuals by appealing to their "return to rationality." Earlier research (Mostafa, 2007; Bashir et al., 2019; Zahan et al., 2020) were susceptive about the causal link between attitudes and propensity, the current study indicates a strong association between the two, this contributes to the existing literature body. According to the results of this study, educating youngsters about the need of using environmentally friendly items can help raise their environmental consciousness. Thus, it also provides evidences to business-practitioners that young generation who are concerned about the environment will prefer using environmentally friendly products. A person's actions and efforts are guided by the information they process, weigh, and integrate from a variety of sources about their capabilities and the outcomes of a behavior. Hence the study findings guiding the practitioner to focus more on providing sustainable offerings to society also to create awareness through different marketing activities as the young consumers now eventually become the future decision maker. The study findings also empirically depict the mediating role of green purchase attitude in young consumers, empirically it illustrate that though the young consumers are serious about environmental issues and are aware of the harmful effects of using or consuming unsustainable marketing practices and offerings, it doesn't always directly guarantee their determination to involve in green purchase offerings until unless it is shaped through their sentiment or mental framework. This finding supports to an extent to Zheng et al., (2020) where they discussed the significance role of attitude and proposed to further empirically examine its mediating role in shaping the consumer's earnestness, theoretically this enriching the existing green purchase literature. Also this recommend practitioners to psychologically target the young consumers as the study shows there is a gap between simply knowing and real intention of doing in young consumer, this gap can be furnished further by shaping and targeting the attitude level of these young mass.

CONCLUSION

The study findings limited to only India and can be further validated in cross culture context. The study model can be further extended by including other behavioral variables as the present study confined itself to examine till intention and not included any behavioral constructs. Future research works also can be done on investigating the moderating role of environment awareness, education, age and gender in this context. Future studies also need to investigate the influence of digitalization on green purchase behavior of young consumers.

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