

Original Research Article

Understanding the Impact of Situational Factors on Green Purchase Intention in Retailing: A Study of Young Consumers.

Abstract

Much research has been devoted to understanding sustainable consumption using factors from the theory of planned behaviour. However, very few researchers have studied the role of situational factors in this context. The present study is aimed to determine the role of preference of retail store, distance from a retail store, transportation mode and purchase intention in securing sustainable consumption behaviour among retail consumers. A survey by questionnaire was used to collect data from young Indian consumers from Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Delhi. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, data was collected through online mode from 280 respondents by adopting quota sampling. Linear regression analysis was performed to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings of the study reveal that traditional and modern retail stores have a significant effect on purchase intention while having an insignificant effect on sustainable consumption. Further distance from the retail store was found to have an insignificant effect on purchase intention and sustainable consumption. However, transportation mode was found to influence purchase intention and sustainable consumption significantly. Finally, purchase intention explained a 63% variance in sustainable consumption.

Key Words: Green Purchase Intention, Retailing, Sustainability, Store Choice, Transportation Mode, sustainable consumption

1. INTRODUCTION

To achieve the sustainable development goal (SDG-12) of the 2030 UN agenda, sustainable consumption is indispensable[1][2]. The onus of sustainable consumption is placed on consumers[3] and it is argued that any nation's sustainable development will remain an imagination unless sustainable consumption is adopted as the new way of living[4]. Increasing population, rapid urbanization and disastrous economic goals have led to faster consumption of world resources and high waste disposal. The world's current consumption by humans has been reported as equivalent to 1.7 earths. It means 70% of extra resources are consumed by humans that earth can regenerate and by the end of 2030, humans will require 2 earths of renewable resources to meet their consumption demand[5]. One million plastic bottles are purchased every minute and five trillion plastic bags are thrown away each year[6]. Around 39% of total food waste in India is generated from food services and retail[7]. This consumption pattern has adverse social, economic and environmental consequences. Hence, individuals must exhibit sustainable consumption behaviour and discourage irresponsible consumption.

Sustainable consumption is described as fulfilling basic human needs and avoiding extravagant consumption of resources, besides caring for the demand of future generations and environmental good. Consumption is fundamental to all production activities and businesses can play a vital role in the transition toward virtuous consumption[2]. Researchers support that a modification is required in the way policies and priorities are set and executed [8]. New buying patterns encouraged by young consumers are rapidly evolving, who associate high value to the growth of sustainable arrangements of consumption[8]. Researchers advocate that young consumers in emerging markets exhibit a higher inclination toward protecting environmental degradation and have a sense of responsible consumption[9]. They possess a positive attitude towards the environment and display a higher tendency to purchase eco-friendly products[10][11]. Across the globe the combined

purchasing power of young millennials between the age group 19 – 37 years was estimated at 2.5 trillion USD for the year ending 2020 and daily groceries constitute 83% of their total spending[12].

Ethical consumption involves wider characteristics of life. A plethora of research studies has witnessed the role of various behavioural, psychological and control factors to encourage sustainable consumption behaviour using TPB (Theory of Planned Behaviour) framework [13][14]. However, very few have advocated the role of situational or contextual factors in fostering green consumer intention and sustainable consumption[15][16]. Besides psychological and behavioural determinants, place of purchase (retail stores) as a situational determinant of behaviour is becoming a community space for shoppers, where they develop social networks and exert pressure on changing patterns of buying by sharing preferences, knowledge and relationships[17]. Several researchers have argued that characteristics of retail stores such as store type, atmosphere, store proximity or traveling distance significantly influence consumers' purchase intention and consumption behaviour. Moreover, the choice of transportation mode influenced by store proximity and availability of transportation is perceived as a vital indicator of sustainable behaviour[18][19]. For that reason, the role of retailers as a link between producers and final consumers is crucial[20] and a transition towards sustainability of the retailing industry is urgently called for. In this backdrop, the study is aimed to investigate the impact of two categorical variables namely preference for retail store and transportation mode on the green purchase intention. Further, the study also attempts to investigate the impact of green purchase intention on sustainable consumption among young Indian consumers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In response to rising environmental issues, consumers' demand for products possessing eco-friendly attributes is also rising[14]. The customers' response to environmentally friendly

products is mostly attributed to their sustainability characteristics such as naturalness, nutritional value, taste, health benefits and environmental benefits[21][22]. Consumers' indulgence in buying sustainable products as a means of contributing to cause of solving environmental issues is referred to as sustainable consumption[23][14]. However, the sustainable consumption argument does not provide for the role of supply chains viz. retailers in fostering sustainable consumption behaviour in elements of society[24][25]. Acting sustainably is a public discourse, wherein several like-minded groups interact and influence each other to further the sustainability agenda[26][27].

Consumers' shopping behaviour is affected by cognitive and affective attributes [28]. Several researchers while applying TPB have identified various factors that influence consumers' sustainable consumption behaviour and classified these factors into individual-related factors and situational factors[29][14][30][15]. Factors linked to a consumer as an individual include environmental attitude, environmental consciousness, environmental knowledge, green purchasing, recycling behaviour and money availability[31][32] while, situational factors contain innovation, green marketing/ advertising, trust in eco-labelled brands, marketing capabilities, accessibility and availability of eco-friendly brands[33][14][16][34]. Although rigorous efforts have been made to understand consumers' disposition toward environmentally friendly products based on psychological and behavioural determinants[35] however, very few research studies have considered understanding the role of physical attributes such as the preference for retail stores and mode of transportation in securing green purchase intention. It is vital to understand that factors related to a consumer may not be sufficient to explain sustainable buying behaviour[35]. Besides factors related to individuals, green consumption can be influenced by product-related factors and factors related to retail stores. Swoboda et al. [36] also argued that physical attributes play a significant role in the consumer buying process.

2.1. Preference for retail Store

Peattie [37] while studying green consumption behaviour argued that it is important to establish the right habitat for the promotion of sustainable consumption through marketing. In the context to retailing, the retail store provides a habitat for the consumption of goods and services. Retail stores besides providing time, place and locational advantages serve as consumption junctions where manufacturers, suppliers and consumers gather, share information and understanding related to changing consumption patterns on grounds of sustainability and redefine sustainable consumption mutually [38][25]. Lehner [27] while studying the influence of retail stores in promoting sustainable consumption argued that, retailers are strong influencers of physical exchange and can better change routine consumption into green consumption intention. Enhancing the product assortment of eco-friendly products in retail setup and utilizing retailers' referral power can facilitate cultivating green purchase intention in consumers [27][39]. On the other side, Lehner [25] through a structured interview with head officials of retail chains acknowledged that consumer behaviour is highly influenced by retail stores and that retailers entertain a strong position to encourage environmentally friendly consumption. Retail stores with the help of marketing artefacts can provide valuable communication of sustainable consumption to consumers [40]. Atulkar and Kesari [41] deciphered that modern retail formats such as supermarkets, malls, etc. influence consumers' buying behaviour directly and indirectly through wider product assortment, large retail space, store atmosphere, brand communication and customer involvement. On the other side, Terano et al. [42] found that consumers prefer to buy fresh fruits and vegetables from modern trade retail formats such as supermarkets where they can ensure quality and label of origin. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Preference for retail stores has a significant impact on green purchase intention

2.2. Transportation Mode

The increasing population and rate of urbanization in developing countries has resulted in high demand for transportation services for varied purposes such as visiting the office or work locations, shopping and other recreational activities[43][44]. It has consequently led to high emissions of heat and other harmful gases resulting in environmental degradation[45][46]. In the context of shopping, the use of transport facilities depends on the store distance, store accessibility and availability of public transportation facilities[18]. Individuals who prefer shopping from nearby shopping centres or retailers (within 3kms) prefer walking or cycling which are termed as sustainable modes of transport [47][19][48]. However, Khangembam [18]translated that shoppers prefer traveling by car when the shopping centre is near a residence. Curtailing harmful use of transportation is imperative for the promotion of environmental sustainability. Lin et al. [49] emphasize that sharing rides such as bike-sharing or car-pooling encourages the practice of using eco-friendly public transport. Roundtable [50] has already stressed making transport carbon neutral as a means of achieving environmental sustainability. The use of the sustainable mode of transport by consumers such as walking, cycling or public transport indicates a high concern for socially responsible consumption[48]. Based on the above literary findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Transportation mode has a significant impact on green purchase intention.

2.3. Green Purchase Intention

Green purchase intention is described as the consumers' wish to purchase environmentally safe products. Describing sustainable consumption necessitates identifying aspects of purchase intention toward eco-friendly products and services [51]. The intention is the probability that a person will behave in a certain way[52]. Consumers' positive intention indicates a stronger urge to purchase behaviour. The intention is considered as an immediate

precursor of behaviour in TPB framework[53][54] and 70% of the variance in consumption behaviour towards sustainable products is accounted for by purchase intention [29]. The results are reinforced by the findings of Mataraci and Kurtulus [55]who corroborated that intention is the strongest predictor of eco-friendly consumption behaviour of Turkish consumers. Hasan[56]propounded that product and store attributes have a significant positive impact on consumers' intention to perform responsible consumption. The study lays that store attributes explained a 35% variance in behavioural intention. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Green purchase intention has a significant impact on sustainable consumption.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The current study lays its conceptual frame on TPB framework propounded by Icek Ajzen in 1985. TPB is the most widely applied framework to explore consumer buying behaviour [57][14]. TPB lays down that attitude, subjective norms and behavioural control form intention which subsequently results in consumption behaviour. However, several studies claimed TPB as inconsistent in predicting behaviour, as it does not take into consideration other situational factors that have a significant role in shaping buying intention [58][59]. For example, Yadav and Pathak [57] claimed that the inclusion of other factors such as environmental knowledge and concern has improved the prognostic power of TPB. Taking into consideration the inclusion of situational factors, the study identifies two factors such as the preference for retail stores and transportation mode as independent variables. Sustainable consumption and purchase intention are taken as dependent variables. The conceptual framework is proposed in Figure 1 below:

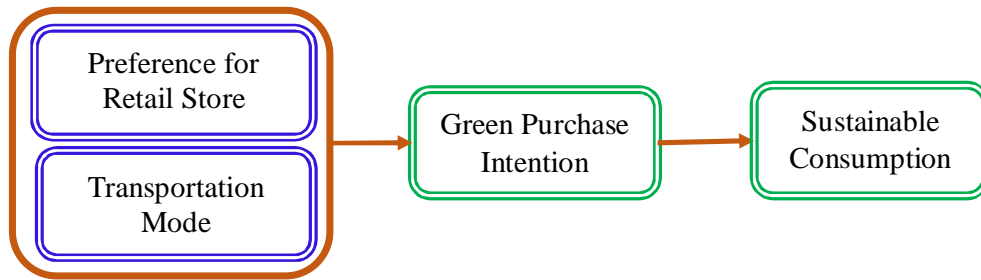


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: The authors.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1. Population and Data Collection

The population of the research study consisted of young Indian consumers belonging to the age group of 16 - 40 years, who have a positive attitude toward social and environmental awareness and sustainable consumption [60][61]. The area was divided into four major zones East, West, North and South, and one highest populous city from each zone i.e. Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore was targeted [62]. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, an online questionnaire survey method was adopted to collect data for the current study [63]. The online survey is considered an effective and acceptable mode for the collection of data [31]. The questionnaire consisted of two sections – section I captured information related to demographic characteristics viz. gender, age, marital status, education and income of respondents and section – II captured information related to two categorical variables viz. preference for retail store and transportation mode and two continuous variables viz. purchase intention and sustainable consumption.

4.2. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Itemized sampling criteria were adopted for sample size determination, which lays that minimum 10 respondents for each item are required to test the hypothesis [64][31]. Based on the above-mentioned criteria, the sample size of 70 is sufficient as the research instrument

consisted of 07 items for two continuous variables. However, researchers have argued that higher accuracy in results can be obtained by taking large sample sizes [65][66]. Therefore, a sample size of 280 respondents was taken for the current study. However, 13 and 21 responses from the survey belonged to age groups 'below 16' years and 'above 40' years respectively and were dropped following the sampling criteria of age. The final sample size considered for the study was 248 respondents, which is sufficient for conducting various statistical analyses such as regression, SEM, ANOVA, etc.[67][68].

Quota sampling was adopted to select a proportionate sample from each city based on its contribution to the total population belonging to the age group 16 – 40 years (Bhat et al., 2021a). The percentage proportion of four major cities to the total young population of the above age group was 39 percent, 29 percent, 22 percent and 10 percent for Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata respectively[69]. Therefore, a sample size of 109 was assigned to Delhi, 82 was assigned to Mumbai, 62 was assigned to Bengaluru and 27 was assigned to Kolkata.

4.3.Operationalization of Variables

The variables in this study consist of two categories based on the type of measurement scale. Category – 1 includes two variables such as the preference for retail store and transportation mode were operationalized as categorical variables. Preference for retail store consists of 02 categories adopted from the study of Terano et al. [42] and transportation mode consists of 04 response categories taken from the studies of Juremalani and Chauhan [43] and Zhang et al. [44]. The inclusion of categorical variables is consistent with the existing research studies in retailing[42][18][44]. Category – 2 includes two variables purchase intention and sustainable consumption that were operationalized as continuous variables and measured on a 05-point Likert scale ranging from 01 (Strongly disagree) to 05 (Strongly agree). Purchase intention consists of 03 statements taken from Francis and white[70] and Das [71]. Sustainable

consumption is measured with the help of 04 items adapted from existing research studies available in context to consumer behaviour and retailing[71][34][72].

Additionally, information related to consumer demographics such as gender, age, marital status, education and income was collected to account for the heterogeneity of the population under study[73]. Demographic characteristics were operationalized as categorical variables viz. gender, marital status, education, age and income[63]. *Gender* consists of 02 response categories male and female [63]. *Age* consists of 05 mutually exclusive response categories such as Below 15, 16-24, 25- 32, 33-40 and Above 40 years [63][66]. *Marital* status consists of 02 response categories single and married[74][63]. *Education* consists of 04 response categories such as Hr. Secondary & Below, Graduation, Post-Graduation and Above Post Graduation[35]. *Income* was measured as a monthly income and consists of 05 response categories such as Below 10000, 10001-30000, 30001-50000, 50001-70000 and Above 70000 indicating different income classes to which a respondent belongs[63].

4.4.Measurement Model (Validity and Reliability)

To measure the fitness of the measurement model confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS 22. Reliability and validity of the measurement model were assessed with the help of Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), Cronbach Alpha (CA) and Discriminant Validity (DV) coefficients[64]. CFA was conducted using a maximum-likelihood approach[75]. Table I depicts the results of CFA, AVE, CR, CA and DV. CFA loading of all items is above standard threshold of 0.70[76] and values of CMIN/DF = 1.402 (Sig. at <0.001), GFI = .981, CFI = .997, RMR = 0.011 and RMSEA = .040 indicate overall acceptability with excellent fit[67][77].

Validity was assessed through AVE and DV measures. Results in Table I reveal that both values of AVE are above the acceptable threshold of 0.50[78][31], which indicates good convergent validity of the measurement model. DV was examined following Fornell-

Larcker's criterion, which advocates that correlation between variables must be less than the square root of AVE[79]. The results reveal that the correlation between constructs is lower than the square root of AVE indicating good discriminant validity[80]. Reliability was examined through both CR and CA measures. The results reveal that the value of CR and CA for both constructs is above 0.70, which is deemed satisfactory for internal consistency and CA [78][75].

Table I: Measurement Model Validity and Reliability Results.

Constructs	Items	CFA Loadings	AVE	CR	CA	DV	
						BIN	SCON
Purchase Intention (PIN)	PIN30	0.928	0.886	0.959	0.959	0.941	
	PIN31	0.947					
	PIN33	0.949					
Sustainable Consumption (SCON)	SCON42	0.941	0.827	0.950	0.949	0.261	0.909
	SCON43	0.940					
	SCON44	0.833					
	SCON45	0.919					

Source: AMOS output

Note: Bold characters shown diagonally represent Square root of AVE; AVE = average variance extracted, CR = composite reliability, CA = Cronbach's alpha, DV = Discriminant Validity

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Sample Characteristics

Table II describes the sample characteristics in the form of respondents' demographic profiles. The results reveal that majority of the respondents who participated in the survey belonged to the male category (70.6 percent) and the rest belonged to the female category

(29.4 percent). Respondents' age considered for the study consists of 03 categories: 16 – 24, 25 – 32 and 33 – 40 years. The highest percentage of respondents belong to the age group of 16 – 24 years (45.6 percent) and the lowest percentage belongs to 33 – 40 years (21.4 percent). Sample results of marital status reveal that the percentage of respondents who are single (60.1 percent) is higher than married ones (39.9 percent). The demographic characteristic of education depicts that the highest percentage of respondents have studied post-graduation (56.5 percent) and the lowest percentage (1.6 percent) has pursued education of Hr. secondary and below. Income consists of 5 response categories ranging from Below 10,000 to Above 70,000 income group. The results related to income reveal that the highest percentage of respondents (26.6 percent) earned income of 10,001 – 30,000 rupees per month and the lowest percentage of respondents (13.7 percent) belonged to the 30,001 – 50,000 income group.

Table II: Respondents' demographic profile

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Gender			
Male	175	70.6	70.6
Female	73	29.4	100
Age			
16-24	113	45.6	45.6
25- 32	82	33.1	78.6
33-40	53	21.4	100
Marital Status			
Single	149	60.1	60.1

Married	99	39.9	100
Education			
Hr. Secondary & Below	4	1.6	1.6
Graduation	42	16.9	18.5
Post-Graduation	140	56.5	75
Above Post-Graduation	62	25	100
Income			
Below 10000	62	25	25
10001-30000	66	26.6	51.6
30001-50000	34	13.7	65.3
50001-70000	35	14.1	79.4
Above 70000	51	20.6	100

Source: SPSS Output

5.2. Regression Results

Linear regression was used to test the proposed hypotheses. Results in Table III reveal that there is a significant positive impact of preference for retail stores on green purchase intention with $\beta = 0.262$ significant at <0.05 level of confidence. Hence, **H1** is supported. The results infer that as consumers start to shift from the traditional retail formats toward modern trade the intention to purchase green products will improve. This finding is in line with the findings of Atulkar and Kesari [41], who deciphered that modern trade retail formats induce consumers into buying more through an alluring store atmosphere, wider product assortment, large retailing space and customer involvement, while traditional retail formats are not capable of. The finding also finds support from the study of Terano et al. [42] who argued that consumers prefer to buy organic products from modern trade retail formats such as supermarkets where they can ensure quality and label of origin.

The results presented in Table III translate that mode of transportation preferred by a consumer for shopping has a significant negative impact on the consumer's intention to purchase green products. Therefore, hypothesis **H2** is supported. The movement of regression coefficients of different modes of transport (Personal Conveyance = -0.181, sig. = 0.049; Auto/ Cab = -0.456, sig.= 0.043; Bus/ Train = -0.621, sig.= 0.027) indicates the increasing negative impact on green purchase intention. It reflects the tendency of consumers to say no to green products increases with a shift from more personal and comfortable means of transport to buses/ trains. It may be due to the low disposable income of consumers who mostly prefer and afford to travel by bus/ train.

Table III. Regression Results

Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention					
Variables	Coefficients	Std. Error	t	Sig.	Decision
(Constant)	3.861	0.101	38.081	.000	
Preference for Retail Store (Dummy Variable)	0.262	0.123	2.130	.034	Supported
Transportation Mode					
Personal Conveyance (Dummy Variables)	-0.181	0.126	-1.981	.049	Supported
Auto/ Cab (Dummy Variables)	-0.456	0.224	-2.036	.043	Supported
Bus/ Train (Dummy Variables)	-0.621	0.278	-2.229	.027	Supported
F Value	3.533				
R Square	0.277				

Source: SPSS Output

The low income of consumers thus refrains them from spending on high-cost green products. The unavailability of shopping centers selling green products near consumers can also be attributed as a cause for traveling by cabs and buses subsequently to a lack of green purchase intention. Further, the negative regression scores also signify that with an increase in green purchase intent the preference for transportation will move towards zero (0) which refers to walking/ cycling. The results are in confirmation with the findings of Herrmann-Lunecke et al. [48] who believed that walking and cycling are the modes of green transportation. The findings are also consistent with the results of Stastna et al.[47] and Molina[19], who reported that consumers who live in proximity to the store prefer walking/ cycling for commutation and have high purchase intention. Khangembam [18]has also reported that consumers who travel by bus or train exhibit lower intention to purchase because of less financial resources and shopping time. The results also present that data fits the linear regression model with F-value = 3.533 and R square = 0.277. It shows that the two situational factors explain more than 27 percent of the variance in consumers' intention to purchase green products.

Lastly, Table IV depicts that purchase intention has a significant positive impact on sustainable consumption. Hence, hypothesis **H3** is supported with a standard regression coefficient of 0.251 at a < 0.001 level of significance. The R-square value of 0.63 indicates that purchase intention explains 63 percent of the variation in sustainable consumption. The finding is consistent with the findings of Kumar et al. [29], who argued that intention accounts for 70% of the variance in purchasing behaviour for sustainable products. The results also find support from the studies of Yadav and Pathak [53]. However, the findings of the current study contradict the findings of Mahardika et al. [54]. They argued that intention

is a poor predictor of behaviour because it varies over time and respondents overrate their inclination towards purchasing eco-friendly products due to social pressure[81].

Table IV: Results of Linear Regression

DV: Sustainable Consumption						
Variable	Coefficients	Std. Coefficient	Error	T-value	Sig.	Decision
Purchase Intention	0.251	0.064		4.07	0.000	Supported
F-value	16.547					
R-square	0.63					
Adjusted R-square	0.59					

Source: SPSS Output

6. IMPLICATIONS

The ability of TPB to explain purchase intention was validated in light of situational factors. The study contributes to the literature by providing an empirical validation for the role of some select situational factors viz. preference for retail store and transportation mode in determining green purchase intention. The research study can help policymakers of the retailing industry to devise distinctive marketing and distribution strategies to permanently alter consumers' preference for shopping centres selling environmentally friendly products. The significance of retail store preference towards purchase intention indicates that a transition towards modern trade has already taken pace. Thus, manufacturers of eco-friendly products should work on marketing campaigns that foster sustainable consumption and also work on improving customer engagement inside stores.

As for the significance of transportation mode is concerned, consumers who prefer walking/ cycling are considered environmentally conscious consumers to consumers who prefer other modes of transportation. The policymakers of big retail organizations should choose locations

that are convenient and easily accessible to consumers. The availability of stores selling green products near a consumer can facilitate enhancing their tendency to purchase and can also contribute to environmental welfare by reducing the usage of personal conveyance for shopping.

7. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The study has concluded that consumers differ in their perception of traditional retail format and modern trade regarding green purchase intention. A significant positive impact of the preference for retail store reveals that the shift toward modern retailing will enhance consumers' green purchase intention. Retailers need to give more emphasis to the store atmospherics, customer involvement and wider product assortment. The results of another situational factor also decipher that green purchase intention is influenced by the mode of transport opted by consumers for shopping. Consumers who prefer walking/ cycling for shopping reflect favorable green purchase intention. Finally, it was observed that purchase intention has a significant positive impact on sustainable consumption. The study has found that 63 percent of the variance in sustainable consumption is explained by purchase intention.

The main limitation of the study is that it relies on consumers' self-reported behaviour. Consumers tend to report amplified inclination toward consuming goods that are environmentally friendly or they make embellished claims while reporting their sustainable behaviour. Therefore, actual consumption data can be subjected to examination for identifying real sustainable consumption behaviour. The second limitation is that the study is conducted in four metropolitan cities of India, where there is a reasonable presence of modern trade and easy access to markets. Future research can be conducted in small cities where there is high dependence on traditional retail and negligible presence of modern retail for more generalizability of research results.

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