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Consumer's Characteristics and Social Influence Factors on Green Purchasing Intentions

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of collectivism, external locus of control, subjective norms and environmental visibility on green buying intentions of consumers in Pakistani context. It is based upon the notion of green consumerism, which is not harmful for the environment. The products which are safe and environmental friendly are known as green products. Now a day, the consumer's concern about environment and safety has reached at its extreme. Consequently, they try and intentionally buy those products which are not harmful and they also try to adapt their behaviors accordingly. Organizations' involvement to ecological filth and corrosion inspired customers to backing the greening effort. To see the influence of the different environmental and consumer-related factors on green purchasing, the data was collected from various consumers through self-administered survey questionnaires. Overall 375 survey forms were distributed among which 250 returned filled and useable. The results were obtained through structural equation modeling in AMOS 22. Results revealed that external locus of control had positive relationship with collectivism ($r=0.323$); while, there was a negative relationship between external locus of control and environmental visibility as well subjective norm ($r=-0.184$ and -0.012 , respectively). This study provided valuable insights for marketers to present their products in a more ecological and safe way through personality attributes and social system.

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INTRODUCTION

American Marketing Association (AMA) described ecological marketing as "the marketing of eco-friendly products that are safe for the society and surroundings which contains many activities such as alteration of the product, alteration in development procedure of products, changes in the procedure of packaging and elimination of such activities that have adverse influence on atmosphere." Its basic objective was to skim and take advantage of rapidly changing perceptions of consumers towards a particular product or brand. Ecological marketing can also be referred as promoting and supporting of environmentally fewer injurious, favorable and advantageous products (Saha, 2015). The concern of environment has turned out to be a vital area of interest for international business firms, academics, administration and other stakeholders over the past few decades. In the developed countries, an enhancement in people's knowledge and understanding towards climate

has made it possible to create a cleaner atmosphere and climate in comparison to the less-developed countries (Vitell, 2015). Additionally, regardless of the fact that environmental affairs in the industrial countries are a significant part of many financial, communal and political visible aspects of their lives, little study is conducted in less-developed countries with reference to individuals, environmental affairs and consumer green buying behavior.

The term of ecological marketing was introduced to create pressure on companies to follow respectable and ecological practices and behavior while connecting and dealing with customers, dealers, staff and suppliers (Popkova et al., 2014). A company that desires achievement in ecologic marketing should be devoted to control and operate its functions in an eco-friendly manner. Companies are now publicizing themselves as ecologic companies, which pursue the ecological practices. The governments of state and community sectors are now exhibiting care about the surroundings,

and they are now more considering the affairs of climate like toxic waste, water pollution and worldwide warming. What is the impact of communal influence factors (i.e. subjective norms and environmental visibility) and consumer's traits (i.e. external locus of control and collectivism) on green buying intention of consumers?" This research is a prime attempt to inspect effects of diverse factors on ecological purchasing intentions in Pakistani perspective and context.

The ecological climate is now becoming the most important concern for marketers. Organization's involvement to climatic depravity and degeneration inspired consumers to give ground to the greening movement. Furthermore, some rationalists gave their thoughts about long standing ecological consumerism that takes into account the social surroundings and the climate (Mendleson and Polonsky, 1995). By the year 1990, the literature on green marketing expanded and the notion of ecological consumerism became popular worldwide. Davis (1991) mentioned that commercial organization are incorporating the concept of environment friendliness in their marketing plan and are rushing to promote their products as "Green" products (Prothero, 1990). It is important to mention here that, even in the decades of 1960s and 1970s the environment friendliness remained an issue, for example, Boileau et al. (1970) referred using green marketing aspect while planning any building. Moreover, previous studies have also shown that protection of environment requires a collectively unique approach (Bohlen et al., 1993). Thus, the studies in marketing and other disciplines called for paying attention to concern of consumers and other social groups in green purchases and it was suggested that the commercial interest of the organizations can be protected better by using the green marketing approach (Bragd et al., 1998; Peattie, 1999). While for the marketing planning people, it was important to see what type of people are more inclined towards buying the green products. It was found that the customer's personality's attributes influence what point of view they have toward the surrounding (Fraj and Martinez, 2007).

Collectivism is a person's characteristics in which the person's priority is the others' benefits and advantages over his personal benefits and makes an action which is harmful to the climate (McCarty and Shrum, 2001). As stated in the study of Hofstede (1980) the approaches of collectivism and individualism demonstrated the differences between basic views that affect people's ways of interaction with others, inclination towards group goals and give priority to solidarity. Individualistic or collectivistic perspectives have been set up to have an effect on many communal attitudes. Likewise, individuals' tendency towards individualism or collectivism can influence their eagerness to engage

in environmental mindful approaches. Kim (2005) acknowledged a positive power of collectivism on consumer morals about their recycling behavior. Therefore, it can be argued that the collectivist may exhibit greater tendency towards buying green products. External locus of control is a person's characteristics in which the person imagines or considers that external factors and situations are responsible for their perspectives, actions and decisions (Grable et al., 2009). "Individuals who have more levels of external locus of control consider that outside forces, and their views are controlled by others" (Barwick et al., 2009). Locus of control is a personality trait that is referred as person's thoughts about whether conditions are the results of their personal actions or by outer factors. As stated in the study of Bahn et al. (2001) internal locus of control was the trait which victorious persons have. People with internal locus of control consider themselves responsible for what they get in their whole life. Persons with the personality of internal locus of control consider the world as a tough place to survive, and they have been understanding about things are not always fair and right for them, but they find ways to resolve their issues and they never criticize others. The human being with the trait of external locus of control is unlike from the human being with the trait of internal locus of control. The human being with the trait of external locus of control all the time thinks that external conditions for his failure such as poor fortune, bad monetary situation and God's force. Therefore, this study anticipates that individuals with the trait of external locus of control have not as much authority over ecological affairs, and consequently, have lesser ecological buying intentions.

Subjective norms which are referred to as communal norms can be described as "the individual's faith and view that affect others' decisions on whether a specific action should be carried out" (Park, 2009). According to Ajzen (1985) behavioral intentions of consumers result from the context which is caused by subjective norms and particular behavior and consequently these behavioral intentions of consumers come into being. Subjective norms are social norms could be taken as the opinions or views or beliefs which influence an individual's behavior to act yes or not. Subjective norms could also be believed consumers tendency to display certain behavior towards social stress. Social norms are synonymous with normative belief and motivation to obey; Normative belief could be understood as beliefs which derive others to fancy that the consumers should express particular behavior or not, and Motivation to obey could termed as consumers should follow their society. Consumers construct social norms when they belief that certain act is inevitable and wither they should execute those behavior or not. The importance of those norms is usually affected by the

perceptions of people in proximity with the consumer (Shaw et al., 2015). For example people who are convinced by their family or friends and instructed to purchase ecological products and then the norms which influenced the behavior of consumer are called subjective beliefs. Here the individual is believed to collect positive motivation to catch social norms and this positive motivation results in optimistic social norms and the intentions of the consumers to purchase the ecological products. Finally these optimistic social norms compel the consumers to purchase ecological products (Rahman, 2013).

Green products can be defined as the products which are safe to use and friendly to the environment. Now a day's consumers concern about environment and safety has reached at its extreme. Consequently, they try and intentionally buy those products which are not harmful, and they also try to adapt their behaviors accordingly. Consumers, who are very conscious about their environment, they transform their behavior towards more friendly with environment. Prominence on procurement of green merchandises in place of conventional products is called green consumerism (Morel and Kwakye, 2012). Green buying intentions can be defined as an intentions to buy products which are safe for the surroundings or useful for the society and climate (Arshad et al., 2014). Intentions are believed to carry motivational factors along that influence the behavior of consumer and these intentions are a proof of the amount of effort exerted by the consumers in order to show their persuasion dissuasion to demonstrate the behavior (Chekima et al., 2015). When intension to carry out the behavior are high the likelihood of purchasing green products also shoots high (Dodds, 2015). Additionally, the purchase intention of a customer foretells the customer's probability to purchase a particular product. Hence, to say that the agreeability of the customer to purchase a specific product is directly proportional to the purchase intentions of the customer would not be wrong.

Keeping in view the above mentioned scenario the present study aims to see whether factors like external locus of control, collectivism, environmental visibility and subjective norms have influence on green buying intentions of consumers. Moreover, the study aims investigate whether collectivism and environmental visibility intervene in the relationship between subjective norms and green purchasing intention of consumers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The selected population for conducting this research was the general consumers of Lahore, Punjab-Pakistan with different age groups and diverse in their other attributes. The capital city of Punjab, Lahore was

picked because cost and time constriction was there and also easy approachability of data. In this study, the questionnaires were distributed to be filled by the consumer in the Lahore city centers and malls. The questionnaires were filled by the people of different ages so that the diversity level can be achieved. The convenience sampling technique was utilized for this study. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items, and the 5-point Likert scale was used. A total of 375 questionnaires were distributed to the consumers to be filled. The return rate was 71% and 267 questionnaires were gathered. Out of 267, 17 questionnaires were unfilled. So, the total questionnaires which were useful were 250, and they can be used for analysis. SPSS 22 and AMOS 22 were used for the data analysis. The overall reliability of instrument before dropping the items is 0.82 and the factor vice reliability is also satisfactory. The overall reliability of the instrument improves after dropping the items which is 0.85 and the factor vice reliability also improves after dropping the items.

The suggested theoretical model contains three independent variables, one dependent variable and environmental visibility as mediating variable is given in Figure 1.

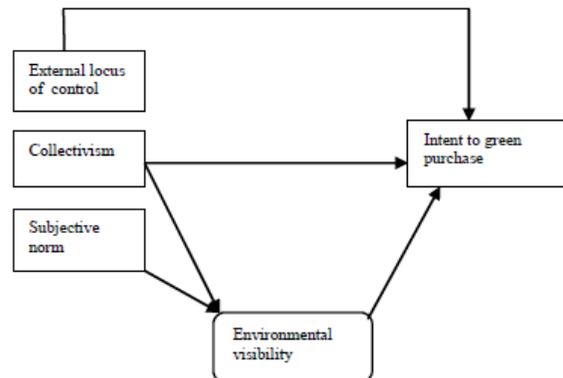


Fig. 1: Theoretical model of variables

Study hypotheses

The present study hypothesizes following;

H₁: Consumers who have more level of external locus of control exhibit lower intention to green buying.

H₂: Individuals who are collectivist exhibit more intention to green buying.

H₃: Environmental visibility has positive influence on green buying intention.

H₄: Collectivism has positive influence on environmental visibility.

H₅: Environmental visibility has meditational effects on the relationship between green buying intention and collectivism.

H₆: Subjective norm has positive influence on environmental visibility.

H7: Environmental visibility has meditational effects on the relationship between green buying intention and subjective norms.

RESULTS

Descriptive analysis

This section provides the descriptive statistics of the variable used in the studies. These statistics help developing an insight about the snapshot of the main variables used in the study. Table 1 exhibits descriptive analysis of the data collected in the study. Table exhibits the mean of the variables and standard deviation (SD) of the variables. The table displays the measures of central tendency in terms of means and dispersion in terms of standard deviation about the variables. The data shows that the collectivism has the largest mean value that is 3.80 with 0.53 SD. While, the mean value of external locus of control is 3.59 and its SD is 0.48. The mean value of environmental visibility is slightly less than the external locus of control 3.52 with standard deviation 0.81. It specifies that most of the respondents gave responses above averages in external locus of control and environmental visibility than others. The mean of the subjective norms is 3.69 with standard deviation 0.84 which also points that it is above the central value, but the dispersion is a little high. The mean of intentions to buy green products is 3.72 with standard deviation 0.92. Before going for further analysis the normality and other assumptions for the data were tested. The value of skewness should be smaller than 3, and the value of kurtosis should be smaller than 10 (Hayes and Preacher, 2010).

Correlation analysis

The results of correlation matrix showed that collectivism, environmental visibility, subjective norms have significant relationship with green purchase intention. The external locus of control did not show the significant relation with green purchase intention. Table 2 shows the bivariate relationships among various factors. There are some negative values and some positive values. Values marked with asterisks show that coefficients of correlation values are significant, and these results are not by chance. We can see that external locus of control has positive significant relationship with collectivism with $r=0.323$. The data revealed that the environmental visibility has a significant negative relationship with external locus of control ($r=-0.184$); similarly, the subjective norms have a weak negative correlation with the external locus of control (-0.012). The data presented in the table exhibits that external locus of control has a positive correlation with consumers' green buying intention ($r=0.125$). The correlation matrix exhibits that collectivism has a weak but positive relationship with environmental visibility ($r=0.026$). The collected data exhibit a moderate

correlation between collectivism subjective norms and green buying intention at $r=0.216$ and 0.291 , respectively.

To perform the hypothesis testing, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used which is a powerful tool to measure and testify the hypothesis using simultaneous equations. Structural equation model is preferred over other types of analytical techniques using two-step approach, measurement model and structural model. It can test mediation, moderation, path analysis and error covariance simultaneously. The structural equation model was utilized to form latent variables; these variables are not measured with precision, but they are generally modeled from many various tested variables. Structural equation model consists of regression, evaluation of paths and factor valuation. AMOS 22 is considered appropriate to use in this research to find out the measurements and check the model fitness. There are two steps of structural equation modeling as described previously (Kenny, 2014). In the first step, the measurement model is the part which relates measured variables to latent variables which is exhibited in the figure 2. The structural model is the part that relates latent variables to one another. The study used the same criteria to test the hypotheses as explained by Kenny (2014).

Table 1: Mean and SD of the variables in the model

Variables	Mean	SD
External locus of control	3.59	0.48
Collectivism	3.80	0.53
Environmental visibility	3.52	0.81
Subjective norm	3.69	0.84
Intention to buy green products	3.72	0.92

Table 2: Correlation analysis of the variables in the theoretical model

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
External locus of control	1				
Collectivism	0.323**	1			
Environmental visibility	-0.184	0.026	1		
Subjective norm	-0.012	0.216*	0.386**	1	
Intent to green purchase	0.125	0.291**	0.278**	0.297**	1

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

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Structural model

Table 3 indicates the goodness and fitness indices of the proposed model with the values of CMIN/DF (chi-Square), DF (Degree of Freedom), GFI (Goodness of Fit), RMR (root mean square residual), AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit index), PGFI and CFI (comparative fit index), RMSEA (root mean square residual) and pClose. The statistics shown in Table 3 suggest that environmental visibility provides the mechanism through which all the antecedents proposed in the study influence on the intentions to buy green products. The measure of goodness of fit exhibit that the proposed relationships in the study are significant.

Table 3: Model fitness summary

Model	CMIN/DF	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI	CFI	RMSEA	PCLOSE
	1.209	0.073	0.887	0.838	0.620	0.943	0.056	0.333

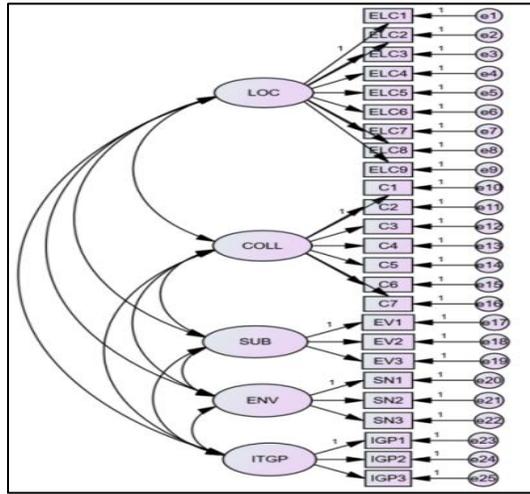


Fig. 2: The Measurement Model for model testing

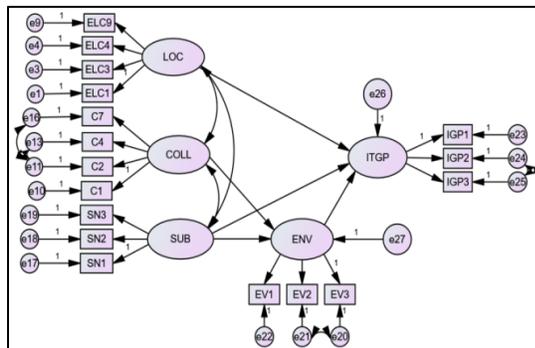


Fig. 3: Structural model for hypotheses testing. Figure Indicates the structural model to find out the regression weights of the relationships proposed in the model. Fig. needs further elaboration?

Table 4: Standardized Regression Weights

Variables	SRW	S.E	C.R	P
ENV<--- SUB	0.729	0.178	2.614	0.009
ENV<--- COLL	-0.244	0.080	-1.559	0.119
ITGP<--- ENV	0.470	0.299	2.450	0.014
ITGP<--- LOC	0.098	0.083	0.827	0.408
ITGP<--- COLL	0.398	0.116	2.742	0.006

*Significant at 0.05 level; **Significant at 0.01 level; ***Significant at 0.001 level.

Table 4 shows the standardized regression weights (SRW), Standard Error (SE), and other related statistics to explain the influence of independent variables on the dependent variables in the model. The table shows that subjective norms (SUB) have significant influence on the environmental visibility (ENV), whereas the influence of collectivism (COLL) is not significant on

environmental visibility (ENV). The data has shown that environmental visibility has a significant influence on intentions to make green purchases. While the failed to reveal any significant influence of locus of control (LOC) on intentions to make green purchases (ITGP). While the influence of collectivism is significant on intentions to make green purchases.

Mediation Analysis for the proposed relationships in the model

In this research, environmental visibility is a mediating variable which provides the mechanism through which collectivism influences the buying the green products and also has a mediating effect on the relationship between green buying intention and subjective norms. For the analysis of mediation, we used SOBEL TEST, which determines that whether there are mediating effects between the variables or not.

Table 5, the model 1 exhibits the coefficients of the proposed relationships, where A represents the value of linkage between subjective norms and environmental visibility, and coefficient B represent the linkage between green buying intention and environmental visibility. The table exhibited that the value of P is 0.07354 which indicated that environmental visibility has partial mediation on green buying intention and subjective norms.

Whereas, the model 2 exhibits the value of coefficients, where A represents the linkage between collectivism and environmental visibility and the value of coefficient B is the linkage between green buying intention and environmental visibility. The value of P which is 0.18763 indicated that environmental visibility does not have mediation on green buying intention and collectivism.

DISCUSSION

The main goal of the study was to answer the research question, i.e. *what is the effect of communal influence factors and consumer's attributes on intention to buy green products in Pakistan?* For this purpose, we used a number of studies published in the past related to the issue on hand; these studies are discussed in the literature review. Then according to the nature of our research we selected quantitative approach to answer the research question. For this study, we adopted the instrument and collected data of 250 via a questionnaire. The data thus collected was analyzed through SPSS and AMOS. We interpret the findings and according to the outcomes, two hypotheses were rejected and five were accepted. We will discuss here the conclusion and findings in detail and give some recommendations as well as future directions to other researchers and marketers as well.

Table 5: Statistics of SOBEL Test

	Coefficient (A)	S.E (A)	Coefficient (B)	S.E (B)	T-Statistics	P Value
Model 1	0.466	0.178	0.733	0.299	1.78944	0.07354
Model 2	0.125	0.080	0.733	0.299	1.31762	0.18763

A number of studies have found that consumers in the whole world are inclining towards buying the green products (Dodds, 2015; Morel and Kwakye, 2012). The study provides ecological marketers a clear information and understanding about how communal influence factors, and consumers' traits have an impact on customer's green buying intentions of the Pakistani consumers. Considering how much difference in consumer personality's aspects and moral beliefs gave contrasting feedback about the ecological purchase intentions help ecological marketers to make more customized offerings to attract and manage consumer segments based upon consumer traits (i.e. external locus of control and collectivism), thereby enhancing the effectiveness of eco-friendly product sales activities (Barwick et al., 2009; Kim, 2005). Because social norms help to assure and satisfy consumers to purchase eco-friendly products; the green marketing can motivate individuals to ask their peer group, family, or colleagues to contribute in the environment and climate safety actions to form social norms generally about being more environmentally responsible and specifically buying green products. The result found in the study pinpoints using effective promotional tactics in order to boost up the environmental friendliness among the consumer groups. The green marketers should be obliged to take on various informational methods and plans to boost up the visibility of green affair.

The study has shown that locus of control has strong influence on the green purchase behavior. It was found that those customers who exhibited the external locus of control have shown a weak tendency to buy the green purchases, while people with internal locus of control have exhibited to buy more green products, and the results are in line with the existing literature (Barwick, et al., 2009). Moreover, the data collected in the study have shown that collectivism is one of the vital factors influencing the consumer buying decisions (Kim, 2005). The results have demonstrated that collectivism has a positive and powerful impact on the green buying intention of the Pakistani consumers. Therefore, based upon the data collected in the study, it can be inferred that people with high collectivism can be strongly influenced by the communal advice; therefore, it may positively influence the environmental visibility (Wang, 2014). The results had shown the subjective norms of consumers about the green buying had a strong influence on environmental visibility as found by Shaw et al. (2015). The mediation analysis suggested that, data failed to prove that environmental visibility provides a mechanism through which collectivism

effects the green purchase intention. Though it is established that the collectivism significantly influences the green purchases in the customers of Pakistan; however, the environmental visibility could not establish any mediation effected on the relationship between collectivism and green buying intention of the Pakistani consumers. The study also showed that the subjective norms of the society about the green purchases had a significantly positive influence on the green purchase intentions of the Pakistani consumers. Moreover, it was established that, the environmental visibility also exhibited positive significant influence on green buying intention but environmental visibility showed a partial mediating relationship between subjective norms of the society about green purchases and green buying intention of the Pakistani consumers.

Conclusions

Ecological purchasing contains many different services and products (e.g. detergents, cars, computers and foods), authenticating the outcomes of this research model for a specific service and product should be conducted in the future. With the increased importance of eco-friendly products in people, ecological marketers should have more information and understanding about ecological consumers, their attitudes, nature and the consumer's traits and social factors that have effect on eco-friendly product purchasing intentions. The ecological marketers should embellish the awareness about green approach by arranging green campaigns to develop a fundamental knowledge and facts about climate within the society. Likewise, the marketers that consider themselves as green marketing professional should work to protect the environment.

Authors' contributions

All authors contributed equally in the development of research design, data collection, data analysis writing and editing the manuscript.

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