

**PREDICTING CONSUMERS' INTENTIONS
TO PURCHASE ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS THROUGH SERVICE
QUALITY AND GREEN VALUE ORIENTATION**

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Abstract

Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) was used in this research study, to examine the influence of environmental measures on consumer purchase intentions, towards purchasing eco-friendly athletic wear. To evaluate the associations between variables, a sample of 280 Indian consumers was employed. The research tool, Lisrel 8.80, was used to analyse the data, using the partial least square structural equation modelling (SEM) method. Results indicated that green purchasing behaviour was positively correlated with all the environmental factors considered in this study. Using the theory of OIT, this research is one of the first attempts to examine how environmentally motivating variables affect consumers' inclinations towards environmentally responsible sporting apparel. This study used SEM to perform multiple regression in the sports wear marketing management.

Keywords: *Environmental Consciousness, Organismic Integration Theory, Environmental Attitude, Environmental Concern, SEM,*

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1. Introduction

The consumption of products and services has rapidly increased during the last ten years (Kim et al., 2021). This higher consumption rate has a detrimental influence on society and the environment (Joshi and Rahman, 2015; Zheng et al., 2021). According to Ali et al. (2011), “solid wastes, ozone depletion, global warming, and air pollution” are additional reasons for the worldwide problem of environmental degradation. Environmental adversities are brought on by business operations like sourcing, production, shipping, and marketing. The manufacturing and commercial practices, used by the athletic clothing sector, are also criticised for having a negative impact on the environment (Witek and Kuzniar, 2021; Kim and Oh, 2020). For example, the washing processes used to produce athletic gear cause a sizable quantity of carbon emissions (Aldalbahi et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2017). One tonne of clothing manufacture pollutes 200 tonnes of water and uses around 25% of the world’s total pesticide supply for cotton cultivation (Nagurney and Yu, 2012). Sports and athletic clothing companies responded to the criticism by putting sustainability at the forefront of their strategy planning (Kim and Oh, 2020). The recent emergence of sportswear giants like Adidas, Nike, and Puma, prefer items made of environmentally friendly materials such as organic cotton (Achabou, 2021; Achabou et al., 2020; Kozlowski et al., 2012). Kim and Oh (2020) emphasised the need for more study to come up with strategies for lowering the environmental cost of producing and using sporting goods.

Green consumer behaviour refers to consumers’ inclination to preserve the environment through eco-friendly practices. Organisations, all over the world, are working

to promote green consumer behaviour in order to create a sustainable environment (Kumar et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2019). In other words, environmentally friendly actions result from environmentally friendly behaviours. Environmental concerns have a beneficial impact on purchase decisions. According to Lee’s (2009) research, customers’ perceived environmental responsibility influences their propensity to buy environmentally friendly goods. Peer influence can also help consumers to make more environmentally responsible purchases (Lee, 2010). Additionally, human behaviour is influenced by personal beliefs (Weng and Run, 2013; Costa and McCrae, 2001; Schwartz, 1994), which varies depending on the type of product (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004), such as eco-friendly sporting apparel. Motivating variables were studied in this research with green purchasing behaviour in order to support the aforementioned assumption. Additionally, research suggests that gender differences exist in how individuals make purchases (Hur et al., 2014; Zelezny et al., 2000; Gilal et al., 2018, 2020a).

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Foundational Concepts and Green Consumer Behaviour

According to Groening et al. (2018), green buying behaviour can be based on either extrinsic or internal motivation. Internal motivation is the most independent type of motive since it encourages behaviour only for its own reason. For instance, a person’s interest in or aptitude for green products may serve as the driving force while making a purchase. Information sharing and educating people, play a crucial role as one may be inspired to buy green items, especially when they are aware of how doing so will contribute to environmental sustainability and protection.

Environmental motivating factors and green purchasing practices may be related, according to academic research (**Arsal and Atalar, 2016; Lee, 2010; Mark and Law, 2015**). According to **Chen (2009)**, customer attitudes towards purchasing organic food can be predicted by their environmental attitudes. In a similar vein, **Arsal and Atalar (2016)** discovered that customer intentions to make green purchases are influenced by the same concerns. **Lee (2010)** also came to the conclusion that peer influence helps customers make eco-friendly purchases. In a similar vein, **Mark and Law (2015)** discovered a favourable link between customer intentions and perceptions of their own environmental responsibilities. In other words, environmental motivating factors would favourably influence customers' green behaviour, such as the purchasing of environmentally friendly sporting clothing.

3. Statement of the Problem

The research draws attention towards environmental exploitation in the manufacturing of sports apparel and tries to encourage firms to produce these apparels, with more eco-friendly material and measure it in sports apparel buying behaviour context, with the help of Organismic Integration Theory. Eco-friendly consumer behaviour plays an important role in reducing consumerism's negative effects on climate. Therefore, this research tries to find out whether environmental variables (such as green buying habits, environmental concern, perceived environmental responsibility, and peer pressure) affect green purchase behaviour. The research question was addressed, with proper hypothesis development, followed by robust analysis. The report then offers its recommendations.

4. Need for the Study

Despite the significance of eco-friendly consumer behaviour in reducing consumerism's

negative effects on climate (**Witek and Kuzniar, 2021**), little research has been done on the types of environmental factors that influence people to purchase athletic wear. Therefore, this study fills up the following gaps in the literature on green consumer behaviour and sports management. There is paucity of academic research on the causes of ethical purchasing practices (**Ajzen, 1991**). As a result, alternative theoretical aspects were used for the setting of a developing nation. Moreover, there are very few studies which are empirically robust to examine these measures, and fill this gap.

There is paucity of research in the context of Asian sports apparel industry. Therefore, there was dire need to conduct this research. Additionally, according to **Weng and Run (2013)**, marketing literature supports the idea that customers' behavioural intentions are impacted by their concerns. Despite this, little has been learned about how personal choices impact green behaviour. This study was carried out to fill up these gaps in the literature on green consumer behaviour and sports management.

5. Research Objectives

This study examined the effect of environmental factors (environmental attitude, environmental concerns, perceived environmental responsibility and peer influence) on consumers' intentions to purchase eco-friendly athletic wear. They are:

1. To identify measures of eco-friendly behaviour and green purchase behaviour.
2. To establish unidimensionality, reliability and validity of all measures.
3. To assess the influence of measures of eco-friendly behaviour on purchasing decisions among the sports apparel customers.
4. To interpret the results in the light of hypothesis and offer findings.

6. Hypotheses of the Study

6.1 Green Buying Habits (GBH) and Environmental Attitudes

According to **Maio et al. (2018)**, attitude is an assessment of one's views regarding things, concepts, people, events, or behaviours. According to **Lee and Yun (2015)**, environmental attitude refers to a person's behavioural goals, thoughts, and feelings towards the environment. Given that attitude is a psychological feeling, academic literature suggests that many researchers had examined the role of attitude in waste management, recycling behaviour, eco-friendly shopping, and other behaviours in various cultural contexts. According to **Kumar et al. (2021)**, a consumer's mindset influences the intentions when they are worried about the environment. Customers who exhibit pro-environmental behaviours, would make green purchases because they believe it is required to protect the environment through responsible consumption. In other words, in the setting of a developing nation like India, the current study proposes to find out the connection between customers' attitudes towards the environment and purchases of eco-friendly sporting clothing. Hence the following hypothesis:

H1. Consumers' green shopping behaviour is favourably correlated with their environmental attitudes.

6.2 Concern for the Environment (EC) and Green Purchasing Practices

Environmental concern is the degree to which a person is aware of environmental problems and potential remedies (**Zheng et al., 2021**). According to **Aman et al. (2012)** and **Lee (2009)**, environmental concern refers to people's emotional reactions that show their anxieties and resistance to environmental destruction. Environmental concerns are known to predict customers' eco-friendly behaviour

(**Zheng et al., 2021**). **Jekria and Daud (2016)**. Increasing environmental concerns can improve recycling behaviour. In other words, environmentally conscious customers would engage in green purchasing behaviour because they feel that it is their duty to protect the environment. Hence the study suggested the following hypothesis to be tested.

H2. Green consumer behaviour is strongly correlated with environmental concerns.

6.3. Peer Influence (PI) and Environmentally Friendly Buying Habits

Peer influence is reported when peers encourage one to act in a particular way and they impact one's behaviours and actions (**Suki and Suki, 2019**). Individuals can adopt green behaviour by receiving peer support (**Kumar, 2012**), which helps them adhere to social norms. Many researchers (e.g. **Persuad and Schillo, 2017; Ha and Janda, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2017; Rizwan et al., 2013**) have stressed the role of PI on customer green behaviour. **Lee (2010)** found that peer influence can boost eco-friendly buying behaviour because peers serve as each other's sources of inspiration. **Lee (2014)**, also discovered a link between green consumer behaviour and sustainable consumption among educated customers. In view of the favourable correlation between these variables while buying sporting apparel, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H3. Consumers' green buying behaviour is favourably correlated with peer influence.

6.4. Perceived Environmental Responsibility and Environmentally Friendly Shopping Habits (PER)

The degree of a person's behavioural responsibility for environmental deterioration is shown by their environmental responsibility (**Hamzah and Tanwir, 2021**). According to **Yu et al. (2017)**, consumers' environmental duty

includes persuading themselves to buy environmentally friendly items, cut back on unsustainable consumption, and get involved in environmental concerns. According to the concept of green consumer behaviour, consumer environmental responsibility may reduce the negative effects of consumerism and promote green behaviour (Ferri and Pedrini, 2018). Customers are less likely to engage in hazardous consumption when they carry responsible intentions to buy environmentally friendly products. People, who believe in environmental responsibility, show more interest in solving environmental issues (Paco and Gouveia, 2016). Based on the encouraging link between consumer environmental consciousness and the purchasing of eco-friendly sporting apparel, the following hypothesis was framed:

H4. Consumers' green shopping behaviour is strongly correlated with perceived environmental responsibility.

7. Research Methodology

7.1 Sample Selection

Individuals, who purchased eco-friendly sports gear in four distinct cities in India, namely, Delhi, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Chennai, were contacted for the survey. The stratified sampling approach was employed to get the necessary data. Data were collected from the potential customers in shopping malls. Participants were surveyed to determine their usage of athletic gear. If participants indicated that they did utilise athletic clothing, they were invited to take part in a survey lasting between 5 to 8 minutes. From all cities, 10 collection centres were identified. 100 responses were collected from each city and finally, usable responses were found to be 280.

7.2 Period of Study

The study was conducted between January 2023 and June 2023. The data were collected within the same time frame.

7.3 Sources of Data

Primary data were used for this study. The data were collected from individuals, who purchased eco-friendly sports gear in four cities in India, namely, Delhi, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Chennai, for conducting this research.

7.4 Tools used in the Study

Data were analysed by using SEM, using lisrel 8.80. The SEM methodology was used for this study because of its suitability in examining the relationship between environmental characteristics. The researchers utilised scale items from prior studies, to assess the independent and dependent variables. Researchers successfully employed Likert's Scale, consisting of five points, with 1 representing strong disagreement and 5 representing strong agreement. A preliminary investigation was undertaken, to ascertain the precision of the scale components. The measurement of environmental attitude was conducted, using a set of seven items developed by Lee (2009). Similarly, environmental concern was assessed using a four-item scale, also developed by Lee (2009). Perceived environmental responsibility and Peer Influence were developed by Lee (2009) (Six item and five items respectively). Individual green values were based on 3 item scale, developed by Steg et al. (2005). Lastly, a seven item green purchasing behaviour scale, developed by Lee (2009), was employed in this study.

8. Data Analysis and Interpretation

In accordance with the recommendations found in the literature on Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), a two-step technique was employed, as prescribed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Initially, the measurement model was tested for foundational statistical tests. At this stage, inidimensionality, reliability and validity were assessed. To assess

unidimensionality, the study used the analysis of factor loadings for each item, with a minimum criterion of 0.40 being upheld, as suggested by **Hair et al. (2016)**. To establish convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) was examined, and all values exceeded the threshold of 0.50, concurring with previous studies (**Bagozzi et al., 1991; Chin, 1998**)

The assessment of discriminant validity was conducted by the utilisation of the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). Then the structural model was assessed, which is a key component in academic research and analysis. It serves as a framework for understanding and examining the relationships between variables in a given study. In accordance with recommended protocols, the second phase of the study was the evaluation of the structural model (**Hair et al., 2020, 2021**). The results were consistent with other studies. The most influential factor was Environmental Concern (*0.82), followed by Perceived Environmental Consciousness (**0.78), and Peer Influence (0.65). Green buying habits was found to exert least influence on Green Buying Behaviour (*0.23). The findings of the structural model are given in **Table -1** and **Table -2**.

The primary factor that appears to have the most impact on promoting green purchasing behaviour among customers, specifically in relation to the purchase of eco-friendly sporting clothing, was Environmental Concern. The findings indicated that factors such as EC, PI, and PER, did play significant roles in predicting the consumer's decision to purchase eco-friendly sporting clothing. In accordance with other research findings, the present findings revealed that the influence of PI on environmentally conscious purchasing behaviour was likely to be more pronounced among those who reported strong pro-environmental views.

9. Findings of the Study

The findings of the research demonstrated that all the independent variables did exert positive impact on the green buying behaviour of Indian consumers, specifically in relation to eco-friendly sporting clothing. The research findings make valuable contribution to the existing OIT paradigm, by proposing that enhancing environmental motivating elements might effectively stimulate the purchase of eco-friendly sporting clothing. However, there is lack of research, specifically within the context of eco-friendly sporting clothing. Peer influence played a crucial role in facilitating green consumer behaviour. This conclusion concurred with the research conducted by **Nguyen et al. (2017)** and **Rizwan et al. (2013)**, which also concluded that peer influence reported favourable effect on consumer behaviour, regarding eco-friendly purchases. The findings, presented in this study, agreed with the research conducted by **Kumar et al. (2021)** and **Kumar (2019)**, which demonstrated that individuals' environmental attitudes did play a crucial role in predicting their propensity towards engaging in green buying behaviours.

Similarly, a strong statistical association was observed between environmental concern and green purchasing behaviour, indicating that environmental concern stimulated green buying behaviour. This discovery agreed with previous studies, conducted by **Zheng et al. (2021)** and **Arýsal and Atalar (2016)**, which demonstrated statistically significant influence of intentions on engaging in environmentally friendly purchases and their level of care for the environment. The study revealed a statistically significant correlation between individuals' perception of environmental responsibility and their behaviour of making green purchases. In other words, individuals, who comprehend the fragility of the

natural environment, tend to acknowledge their responsibility towards it and exhibit a preference for environmentally sustainable purchases. This observation is consistent with the findings of **Ferri and Pedrini (2018)** as well as **Mark and Law (2015)**, who proposed that persons, who are environmentally conscious, tend to participate in activities that are beneficial to the environment.

10. Suggestions

Measures of green consumer behaviour, with respect to Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), were explored in this research through SEM, in order to encourage strategies for mitigating the adverse environmental effects of sports products, through the promotion of green consumer behaviour. The present study suggests measures to promote green behaviour to acquire eco-friendly sporting apparel. Despite acknowledging the significance of green behaviour in the realm of environmental management, academic scholars have shown limited interest in establishing a connection between measures of eco-friendly behaviour and green buying behaviour. Hence this study makes a valuable contribution to existing theoretical frameworks, by offering a novel viewpoint on the relationship between measures of eco-friendly attitude and green buying behaviour. Therefore, it is recommended that marketing managers in the athletic wear industry who aim to promote eco-friendly athletic wear, should develop their marketing activities in a manner that effectively influence individual peer behaviour. This can be achieved by broadcasting informative and regulated advertisements, that stimulate environmental awareness and foster a sense of environmental responsibility among individuals.

11. Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that customers' green buying behaviour is significantly

influenced by their environmental perspective. Individuals who have a sense of duty towards the environment, engage in pro-environmental behaviours, such as green shopping, in order to mitigate the adverse effects of consumerism on the natural world. This observation concurred with the findings of **Rahman and Reynolds (2019) and Lee (2010)**, who proposed that individual values and peer influence play a role in motivating individuals to acquire environmentally less damaging items. It is shown that consumers are increasingly prioritising environmental concerns and exhibiting a preference for purchasing items that are biodegradable. Consequently, they are more likely to engage in purchasing environmentally friendly items as the means of promoting sustainability. This discovery further confirmed the conclusion, drawn by **Gilal et al. (2020b)**, regarding the impact of different types of motivation on green consumer behaviour. Specifically, the study found that consumers engage in the purchase of green products and services due to their awareness of the associated advantages, such as reduced environmental harm and the use of less toxic materials. This behaviour reflects their genuine environmental concerns. Likewise, it has been observed that peer influence serves as a significant predictor of environmentally conscious purchase behaviour among many customers. This discovery indicates that the purchasing behaviour of many customers in relation to green items is impacted by the green purchases made by their social circle. This discovery synchronised with the research conducted by **Lee 2010, 2014)**, which documented the correlation approach in this regard. This conclusion was also consistent with the research conducted by **Gilal et al. (2018)**.

12. Limitations

Despite efforts to carry out a theoretically and empirically sound inquiry, the study was not

without its flaws. The study included only a limited sample. There could have been problems with the study's small sample because a bigger sample size could have led to results that were more generalizable. Data were collected personally and the response rate was not as high as it may have been since the personal interview strategy was not employed. The study's foundation was laid by customers' opinions. However, studies based on a single source might raise issues with common method bias. It is possible to regard the research's lack of a multi-respondent design as a limitation. Due to the study's cross-sectional design, it is susceptible to the limitations of this kind of research.

13. Scope for Further Study

Potential avenues for future research may involve investigating the role of various age cohorts as moderating variables, with a specific focus on discerning potential variations in the impact of these factors on consumer behaviour related to green purchases across different age groups. The literary contribution of this research cannot be ignored on green consumer behaviour and environmental management. It has achieved this by highlighting both theoretical and practical consequences. Specifically, the study focused on eco-friendly sporting apparel. The present study employed a data set, consisting of 280 consumers, to investigate the impact of various environmental elements on green buying behaviour. Hence researchers, specialising in green marketing from across the world, to replicate this study, in order to assess its validity and evolve generalizability across other contexts (Gilal et al., 2020b; Garg, 2015).

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Table -1: Displays the comprehensive outcomes of the measuring methodology regarding consumers’ intentions to purchase eco-friendly products

CONSTRUCTS	CRONBACH ALPHA	AVE	T VALUES	LOADINGS RANGE
GBH	0.7	0.50	2.67	0.44-0.56
EC	0.8	0.60	3.77	0.59-0.77
PI	0.7	0.66	3.67	0.70-0.80
PER	0.7	0.55	5.66	0.54-.0.76

Source: Primary Data Computed using Lisrel 8.80

Table -2: Estimates for hypothesis decision regarding consumers’ intentions to purchase eco-friendly products

CONSTRUCTS	ESTIMATES	HYPOTHESIS
GBH → GBB	0.23	Accepted
EC → GBB	0.82	Accepted
PI → GBB	0.65	Accepted
PER → GBB	0.78	Accepted

Source: Primary Data computed using Lisrel 8.80