

Consumers' personal values towards green consumption: A review

Sivapalan Achchuthan, Southern Cross University, a.sivapalan.10@student.scu.edu.au

Tania von der Heidt, Southern Cross University, Tania.Vonderheidt@scu.edu.au

Golam Sorwar, Southern Cross University, golam.sorwar@scu.edu.au

Pascal Scherrer, Southern Cross University, Pascal.Scherrer@scu.edu.au

Abstract:

This paper reports on a structured review to synthesize the literature on consumers' personal values (CPVs) towards green consumption. The review identified 14 empirical studies, which modeled green offering-related CPVs. The studies capture three unique values such as altruistic, biospheric, and egoistic. They also reveal the value-action gap in green consumption, i.e., even consumers with strong environmental concern (i.e., altruistic and biospheric consumers) do not show the consistent preferences towards green purchasing. The review highlights that empirical research into green consumption in newly industrial countries of Asian region, such as China, Malaysia, and Singapore is lagging. This review contributes to the literature on CPVs in relation to green consumption. It also indicates to green marketers strategies on how to enhance marketing strategies by drawing on CPVs.

Keywords: Consumers' personal values, green consumption, review

Introduction

Consumption activities of people around the world exacerbate environmental degradation (Yadav et al., 2019). Accordingly, a shift toward green consumption has, in recent years become a key priority of global organisations such as the OECD and the UN (Nguyen et al. 2017). However, consumers are still reluctant to participate in pro-environmental behaviours and green purchasing due to the conflict between collective social gains (environmental protection) and self-interests (high price and inferior performance of green offerings) (Nguyen et al. 2017). A good understanding of consumers' personal values (CPVs) towards green consumption may be particularly important due to the previously outlined conflict between pro-social and self-centred benefits of green consumption (Verma et al., 2019).

CPVs refer to as 'personal beliefs that consumers hold with respect to themselves and the personal goals (i.e., needs and desires) for which they strive' (Schwartz, 1994). CPVs-based models in environmentally sustainable consumption mainly emphasis the Value-belief-norm (VBN) theory (Stern, 2000) in explaining the association between CPVs and green consumption. The theory suggests the role of three key CPVs in predicting pro-environmental behaviours. Such values are: 1) *altruistic values* – personal beliefs emphasising the welfare of others; 2) *biospheric values* – personal beliefs emphasising environmental protection and the biosphere itself and 3) *egoistic values* - personal beliefs emphasising the self-centred benefits. By understanding consumers' personal beliefs concerning green consumption, green marketers and retailers can find the ways to enhance green consumption. Because, consumers' personal beliefs known as 'values' is the root causes of their purchasing behaviours (Stern, 2000). Despite the preceding arguments, there is no review paper that specifically collates the existing findings in relation to CPVs towards green consumption. This is the gap in the literature. We answer the recent calls made to review the literature on CPVs in green consumption context (Verma et al., 2019).

Methods

A structured literature review approach (Massaro et al. 2016) was adopted, in which articles were identified based on three key criteria: (1) Quality (articles published in peer-reviewed journals, graded Q1, Q2, and Q3 in Scimago journal quality list); (2) time period (2000 -2019) and (3) variables under study (CPVs in relation to green consumption – altruistic (Av), biospheric (Bv), egoistic (Ev) values). The online databases EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Scopus, Science Direct and Web of Science were searched using the keywords 'altruistic values', 'biospheric values', 'egoistic values', 'green products/eco-friendly products', and 'green consumption/environmentally sustainable consumption'.

Results and Discussions

The structured literature search yielded 14 empirical studies, which are summarised in Table 1. The studies identified were undertaken across high income (HI), middle income (MI) or low income (LI) countries based on the World Bank (2019) classifications and in a range of green products. Two observations about these studies can be made: Firstly, the studies reveal that even consumers with strong environmental concern (i.e., altruistic and biospheric consumers) do not show the consistent preferences towards green purchasing (Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Doorn & Verhoef, 2015; Ojea & Loureiro, 2007). This is known as value-action gap in green consumption context. The green purchasing barriers such as high price, lack of availability, inferior performance, and lack of trust are the leading causes of such gap (Nguyen et al. 2017). Future researchers can adopt the consumption values (CVs)–oriented lens into green consumer behaviour research to bridge such gap, since CVs are the specific motives in enhancing consumer choices for particular offerings. The concept of CVs refers to as consumers'

assessment of the benefits they receive from using a particular offering – functional (quality), economic (value for money), emotional (affective feelings), social value (social credits), conditional value (rewards and promotion), epistemic value (novelty) etc. (Sheth et al., 1991). Secondly, limited empirical research into green consumption has been undertaken in newly industrial countries of Asian region, such as China, Malaysia, and Singapore.

This review consolidates our understanding of CPVs towards green consumption. It also provides directions for future research to study these CPVs (i.e., consumer concern) along with CVs (i.e., product concern) in a more comprehensive framework. Such research is warranted given the need to accelerate green consumption globally.

Table 1. Empirically studied CPVs based-models in green consumption

Ref	Context	Type of CPVs	Key outcome variable	Relationship	Product
Ojea and Loureiro (2007)	HI (Spain)	Av,Bv,Ev	Willingness to pay for green	Av (+),Bv (-),Ev (+)	Wildlife
Jansson et al. (2010)	HI (Sweden)	Bv	Green purchase intention	Bv (+)	Generic green product
Perkins and Brown (2012)	HI (Australia)	Bv, Ev	Interest towards nature-based tourism	Bv (+), Ev (-)	Eco-tourism
Werff et al. (2014)	HI (Netherlands)	Bv	Environmental self-identity towards green purchasing	Bv (+)	Generic green product
Doorn and Verhoef (2015)	HI (Netherlands)	Av,Bv,Ev	Organic purchasing behaviour	Av (-),Bv (+),Ev (-)	Organic products
Han (2015)	HI (USA)	Bv	Ecological world views and visit intention towards green hotels	Bv (+)	Eco-tourism
Perlaviciute and Steg (2015)	HI (Netherlands)	Bv, Ev	Perceived environmental consequences	Bv (+), Ev (-)	Renewable energy vs nuclear energy
Teng et al. (2015)	HI (Taiwan)	Av	Visit intentions towards green hotels	Av (+)	Eco-tourism
Rahman and Reynolds (2016)	HI (USA)	Bv	Willingness to sacrifice for the environment and Visit intentions towards green hotel	Bv (+)	Eco-tourism
Han et al. (2017)	HI (USA)	Av,Bv,Ev	Environmental beliefs and visit intentions towards green hotels	Av (+),Bv (+),Ev (-)	Eco-tourism
Nguyen et al. (2017a)	MI (Vietnam)	Av,Bv,Ev	Attitude towards environmental protection through green purchasing	Av (+),Bv (+),Ev (-)	Energy efficient appliances
Becker-Leifhold (2018)	HI (Germany)	Av,Bv,Ev	Green purchase intention	Av (-),Bv (-),Ev (+)	Sustainable fashion consumption
Verma et al. (2019)	MI (India)	Av,Bv,Ev	Environmental concern and visit intentions towards green hotels	Av (+),Bv (+),Ev (+)	Eco-tourism
Yadav et al. (2019)	MI (India)	Bv	Attitude towards green hotels and visit intentions towards green hotel	Bv (+)	Eco-tourism

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