

EVALUATING THE DRIVERS OF GREEN CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the drivers of behavioral intention for green consumption and to determine the effects of behavioral intention on actual behavior in green consumption of the consumers. The research is conducted based on consumers who shop in supermarkets and shopping centers located in six townships in Yangon downtown area with the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior. The results of the study reveal that consumer's behavioral intention in green consumption is affected by consumer's attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Moreover, the findings of the research suggest that consumer's self-identity with green consumerism contribute to the prediction of their behavioral intention. The results show the direct relationships between behavioral intention and actual green consumption behavior. This study provides the implications for policy makers and green marketers of to design appropriate policies and strategies to improve the consumers' purchases and usages on green products and service through the measures of stimulating favorable attitudes toward green products, enforcing subjective norms, enhancing perceived behavior control, and promoting self-identity of green consumption.

Keywords – *Green consumption, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, behavioural intention, self-identity.*

Introduction

In recent decades, environmental problems have been prevalent and well-publicized issues since people lived anywhere on the earth has been affected by at least in the form of weather changes and more severely increasing frequency of epidemics and natural disasters. Accordingly, the general public are increasingly paying more attention on environmental protection and adopting environmental conservation measures in their daily life consumption.

Green consumption is widely recognized as an important remedy for environmental problems nowadays. Green consumption refers to a social movement and an attitude and/or behavior of consumers addressing environmental problems through the adoption of environment-friendly behaviors, such as the use of organic products and clean and renewable energy without, or minimum, pollution.

Schlegelmilch, Bohlen & Diamantopoulos (1996) argued that as the responses to environmental problems, consumers search for environment-friendly alternatives to the products they usually buy, rather than decrease their consumption. Moreover, McDougall (1993) asserted that environmental destruction is primarily caused by over-consumption. Williams (2007) among others, criticized the green movements as light-greens and pointed out that such movements as buying eco-friendly products from clothing and cars to vacation packages cannot avert the environmental problems when the cumulative effect of increasing consumption remains enormous and hazardous.

For realization of green consumption movement, three actions of R: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle have been increasingly voiced as eco-friendly behavior (Kates, 2000). In fact, green consumption can be done through two practices: green buying and reduced consumption. For green buying, consumers look for the products that have less environmental impact than conventional products. In reduced consumption, consumers buy less, avoid impulse purchases, and repair the items if it is possible when it breaks instead of buying new ones. However, scholars pointed out that green buying leads to the behavior of buying multiple greens and thereby cannot realize the

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goal of green consumption. For instance, if a cell phone breaks, instead of buying a new sustainably produced cell phone (green buying), the old one can be repaired and used as long as possible (reduced consumption). Therefore, this contradiction makes the interest of this research that how consumers can be educated, persuaded, and enforced to practice green consumption behavior for the sake of environmental protection and conservation. These tasks can be done by knowledge of attitude, value, and behavioral change of consumers in order to deal with environmental problems effectively.

The research on green consumption has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers while Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is an extensively used theory in purchase intention for green consumption behavior from a psychological perspective. Theory of Planned Behavior postulate that actual behavior of a consumer can be predicted by his/her behavioral intention, which is, in turn, influenced by three factors: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control of the consumer (Ajzen, 1991). Later, researches demonstrated that the individual self-identity has also impacted on behavioral intention towards certain behavior. It means that consumer behavioral intention is seen to be adjusted when an issue becomes important to their self-identity (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992; Grinberg & Holmberg 1990).

Although several empirical studies have been conducted on green consumption behavior, there is still a gap in studying green consumption through theory of planned behavior (TPB) in the context of Myanmar. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the drivers of green consumption behavior through empirical study on consumers in Yangon.

To reach the research aim, two research objectives are specified as the analytical frame of this study.

1. To evaluate the drivers of behavioral intention for green consumption; and
2. To analyze the effects of behavioral intention on actual behavior in green consumption of the consumers.

Through identifying the drivers of behavioral intention and actual behavior in green consumption, *this paper supposes to* be a knowledge-base for designing policies and strategies that stimulated consumer awareness, promoted their favorable attitudes, realigned subjective norm, assured perceived behavioral control and enforced self-identity in green consumption.

Literature Review

Unprecedented environmental problems including resource depletion, climate change, and frequent occurrence and wide-spread of epidemics have menaced health and well-being of consumers everywhere. As a result, consumers are becoming more sensitive to environmental issues and growing environmental consciousness that leads to change in their attitudes, preferences and behaviors in searching, buying, and using products and services.

Green Consumption

Green consumption refers to an environmentally responsible behavior of consumers minimized the negative impact of consumption on the environment in their purchases, usage and disposal (Pagiaslis & Krontalis, 2014; Sheng, Xie, Gong & Pan, 2019). In early days, buying green products in daily consumption has been widely accepted as an effective way to solve the environmental problems. However, contemporarily, green consumption has been considered from sustainability point of view and shifted focus to the sustainable consumption. Thus, it is now associated with the attempts to lower the level of consumption of specific materials, commodities, and energies. From green consumption perspectives, consumers need to refrain from the

consumption of specific products that impaired environmental sustainability while they have to practice 3 Rs: reduce, reuse, and recycle even in the using green products.

Green consumption is considered as a comprehensive concept that covers various usage and application of numerous products and services such as organic foods, organic clothing, organic skincare products, reusable shopping bags, electric vehicles, energy efficient household appliances, and organic hotels. Therefore, consumption behavior may be varied with different categories of green products. Several researchers conducted the studies on behavioral differences in different green products. Zhang, Fan, Zhang & Zhang (2019) extended the Theory of Planned Behavior to examine the different effects of cognitive factors between utilitarian green products and hedonic green products. However, the empirical results show that there is no significant different between different product categories. Accordingly, this paper examines the green consumption behavior based on the general class of green products.

Understanding human behaviour is a complex endeavor and difficult to explain why ones behave in certain ways that differed from others. The widely used and well-known tools to examine the human behavior is Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991). According to the TPB, behavioral intention is a main predictor of actual behavior whereas behavioral intention is influenced by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavior control. TPB is an extensively used in examination of behavioral intention in green consumption, in terms of the effect of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control of the consumers (Tanner & Kast, 2003; Hsu, Chang & Yansritakul, 2017) and proved that almost all constructs of TPB are significantly and positively related to purchase intention for green products.

Attitude

Attitude is a person's mood, opinion, and /or disposition. Attitude can be a positive or negative evaluation of an object, action, issue, or person (Hoyer & Macinnis, 2003). According to TPB, more positive attitude towards a particular behavior, more likely to perform that behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Attitudes are formed as a combination of people's beliefs about the particular behavior (green consumption) and their evaluations of behavioral outcomes (impacts of green consumption). Various empirical studies have illustrated the positive impact of attitude on purchase intention for green products (Bamberg & Möser, 2007; Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012; Sreen, Purbey, & Sadarangani, 2018).

Subjective Norm

Subjective norm indicates the perceived social pressure that encourages one to engage in a specific behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Subjective norm is supposed to be a combination of people's perceptions that important others think they should or should not perform the behavior in question and their motivation to comply with others' wishes. Thus, it is the result of interplay between the extent of social pressure and his/her compliance motivation (Ajzen, 1991). The majority of empirical studies demonstrated the effects of subjective norms on intention for buying a green product, visiting a green hotel, using electric car and other pro-environmental behaviors (Thøgersen, 2006; Wu & Man, 2011; Moons & De Pelsmacker, 2012; Yadav & Pathak, 2017).

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) refers to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty in performing particular behavior (Ajzen, 2002). More specifically, it can be defined as the degree of difficulty experienced by an individual in maintaining rationality while performing a specific behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In TPB model, Ajzen (1991) supposes that PBC positively affects the behavioral intentions and actual behaviour. Several empirical studies suppose

that PBC has a positive and significant effect on sustainable consumption behaviors, purchase intention for eco-friendly products and green apparel products (Wang, Liu & Yu, 2014; Bong & Jin, 2017; Camila & Ptrick, 2019).

Behavioral Intention

Intention indicates the extent to which a person is likely to perform a given behavior or action. Behavioral intention refers to a situation where consumer tends to buy a certain product in certain condition (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Ajzen & Fishbein (1980) argued that behavioral intention is the most important and the best predictor of the behaviour. Accordingly, several empirical studies conducted the analyses and their findings indicated that behavioral intention is a predictor of actual behavior in green consumption (Chan, 1999; Elena & Eva, 2007; Mostafa, 2007; Yu, Yu & Chao, 2017).

To improve the predictive ability, previous researchers extended the TPB by inclusion of social impression, environmental consciousness, environmental ethics and beliefs (Chen & Hung, 2003), self-identity and prior behavior (Granberg & Holmberg, 1990; Sparks & Shepherd, 1992) and ethical obligation (Dean, Raats, & Shepherd, 2012). Among them, this study includes self-identity as a predictor of behavioral intention which is in line with the findings of Sparks and Shepherd (1992) as they supposed that self-identity has larger explanatory power than other TPB variables in behavioral intention of green consumption.

Self-Identity

Recent studies highlighted that self-identity contributes to the prediction of behavioral intentions independently from the attitudes towards the behavior. Sparks & Shepherd (1992) asserted that self-identity contributes to behavioral intention over and above the contribution made by the other TPB variables. Self-Identity can be conceptualized as stable and prominent aspects of one's self-perception, especially in relation to social context. The more prominent the self-identity is, the higher the possibility that the person will behave with that identity. For instance, someone who strongly perceive himself as a green consumer is more likely to take every opportunity to behave in accordance with the green consumerism (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992).

Thus, based on the findings of various empirical studies, this paper proposes consumers attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and self-identity as the predictors of behavioral intention and actual behavior in green consumption.

Empirical Analysis

Methodology and Data

In this study, green consumption is examined as generic behavior and the questionnaires are designed to uncover the degree of green orientation of consumers in searching, buying and using products and services. The survey is conducted based on 400 customers who shop at 20 supermarkets and shopping centers located in six townships in Yangon downtown area, namely Botahtaung, Kyauktada, Lanmadaw, Latha, Pabedan, and Pazundaung townships (Yangon Directory, 2020). The sample size is specified as 377 by using Raosoft sample size calculator and the respondents are selected with systematic sampling methods due to unknown population of the shoppers. The data are collected from 400 respondents which consists of 20 customers each from 20 supermarkets and shopping centers during February 2020.

The questionnaire for attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are designed with 11-item scale *adapted from Sreen et al., (2018)*. The attitude is measured with *individual's preference for green products and services over conventional ones*. The subjective

norm is identified through the extent of influence of other important person on his/her decision. The measures of perceived behavioral control are developed to examine an individual's ability to put extra effort to get the green product, perceived confidence and perceived control over his/her decision to buy and use products and services. The questionnaire for self-identity is designed with 3-item scale adapted from Rex, Lobo, & Leckie (2015). Three-item scale for behavioral intention and 4-item scale for actual behavior questionnaires are adapted from Emekci (2019). The questionnaire items of each construct are developed as self-administered questions using 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Analysis

Data analyses are conducted by using SPSS 22.0 software. Firstly, the reliability of the collected data is investigated with Cronbach's α value and then, the extent of consumers' green consumption behavior is evaluated with their mean values. Finally, the multiple regression analysis and simple linear regression are conducted to identify the drivers of behavioral intention and actual behavior in green consumption of the consumers.

Empirical Results

Out of 392 questionnaires fully filled for the purpose of the analysis, 386 valid questionnaires are used for analysis. Regarding demographic profile, about 58 percent of the respondents are female while around 60 percent of the respondents have at least graduate-level education achievement. Almost 63 percent of respondents earned less than Kyat 600,000 per month (Table 1).

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Sr. No.	Demographics Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender: Male	161	41.7
	Female	225	58.3
2	Education: High Scholl	59	15.3
	Undergraduate	98	25.4
	Graduate	207	53.6
	Post-Graduate	22	5.7
3	Income (Kyats):		
	Less than 3 lakhs per month	120	31.1
	Between 3-6 lakhs per month	121	31.3
	Between 6-9 lakhs per month	77	20.0
	9 lakhs & above per month	68	17.6

Source: Survey Data (February, 2020)

The mean value, standard deviation and Cronbach's α of each variable are described in Table 2. All variables measuring green consumption behavior including consumer's attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, self-identity, behavioral intention, and actual behavior can be considered reliable as the value of Cronbach's α more than 0.70 criterion.

Table 2 Results of Reliability Test

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's α
Attitude	4	.820
Subjective Norm	3	.847
Perceived Behavioral Control	4	.831
Self-Identity	3	.849
Behavioral Intention	3	.819
Actual Behavior	4	.837

Source: Survey Data (February, 2020)

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Div.
Attitude	4.28	.70
Subjective Norm	3.79	.75
Perceived Behavioral Control	4.02	.57
Self-Identity	4.36	.68
Behavioral Intention	4.04	.78
Actual Behavior	3.89	.75

Source: Survey Data (February, 2020)

As presented in Table 3, the mean values of consumers' behavioral intention and actual behavior are around 4.0, thus, it is safe to conclude that consumers have green consumption behavior and they have intention and attempt to reduce environmental problems in their daily life consumption. To examine the drivers of behavioral intention for green consumption, the mean value of behavioral intention is regressed with the mean values of attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and self-identity of consumer. Then, to evaluate the effects of behavioral intention on actual behavior in green consumption, the mean value of actual behavior is regressed with the mean value of behavioral intention of the consumers. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

The values of adjusted R-square indicate that regression models can moderately explain the variation of dependent variables.¹ Since the F-Statistics are significant at 1 percent level in both models, it can conclude that both models are valid. The coefficients of all explanatory variables: attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and self-identity are show positive effects on behavioral intention at 1 percent significant level in the first model. In the second model, the coefficient of behavioral intention also has highly significant positive impact on actual behavior.

Table 4 The Drivers of Behavioral Intention & Actual Behavior in Green Consumption

	<i>Behavioral Intention</i>				<i>Actual Behavior</i>		
	B	SE	β	VIF	B	SE	β
Attitude	.468**	.054	.417	1.905			
Subjective Norm	.143**	.043	.138	1.404			
Perceived Behavioral Control	.222**	.066	.161	1.904			
Self-Identity	.217**	.048	.187	1.430			
<i>Behavioral Intention</i>					.508**	.041	.532
R ²	.538				.283		
Adj. R ²	.533				.281		
F-Statistics	110.793**				151.779**		

Source: Survey Data (June, 2020)

Note: ** Significant at 1% level, * Significant at 5% level

¹ In social science predicting human behavior, according to Gary (1986), the low R-square value does not imply that the model is not fit and conclusions can be done based on the significance of coefficient regardless of R-square value.

According to the results, all proposed variables: customer's attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and self-identity play important roles as the drivers of consumers' behavioral intention on green consumption. According to the values of standardized coefficient, customer's attitude and self-identity are major explanatory variables of customer's behavioral intention whereas the remaining two variables also significantly contributes to the intention for green consumption.

Conclusion

General Discussion

This study aims to identify the drivers of behavioral intention and actual behavior based on the constructs of Theory of Planned Behavior and additional variable, self-identity. The results reveal that consumer's behavioral intention in green consumption is affected by all dimensions of TPB, customer's attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Moreover, the findings of the research highlight the contribution of consumers' self-identity to the prediction of their behavioral intention. In addition, the results highlight the direct relationships of behavioral intention and actual behavior in in green consumption.

Based on the findings, it reveals that consumers who concerns about environmental protection and conservation and have favorable attitudes towards green movements have more intention to practice green consumption. Moreover, the results prove that subjective norm of consumers also supports their behavioral intention. It advocates that marketers need to implement the measures that to be seen as doing the right things for society by people who are important to targeted customers and who influence on their decisions. Furthermore, the significant impact of perceived behavioral control highlights that a desired behavior cannot be realized if unless consumers feel confident on their possession of necessary skills, resources, and opportunity to successfully adopt the intended behavior. Among the proposed variables, self-identity is the second largest predictor of behavioral intention. It suggests that when a behavioral issue becomes important to an individual, it becomes part of their self-identity, and they form a desire to behave accordingly. This finding shed the light on importance of marketing practices that embrace the consumers' feeling of green consumption as a part of their self-identity and having an obligation to engage in such practices.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for both academic and practical implications. The findings contribute the existing research on the application of TPB to predict the green consumption behavior. This study also provides empirical evidence that consumers with a higher level of self-identity to green consumption are more willing to behave as a green consumer.

This study offers an insight for policymakers and marketers to attract the attention of people toward environment protection and arouse the purchase intention for green products and services. It provides an implication that policy makers could design relevant environmental protection policies and regulations to promote green consumption of citizens, thereby to endorse environmental protection measures. Moreover, this study provides the evidences that marketers can design appropriate strategies to improve the consumers' purchases and usages of green products and services through the measures of stimulating favorable attitudes, enforcing subjective norms, enhancing perceived behavior control, and promoting self-identity of green consumption behavior. By implementing these measures, it is expected that green consumption and environmental protection behavior of citizen are advantageous to the environmental protection of the whole society.

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