Navigating the Green Path: Unravelling the Influences Behind Sustainable Choices in Eco-Friendly Shopping

Patama Satawedin*, Siwat Chawareewong, Sutirapan Sakkawatra, Kunchalee Sumleerat, Rajsak Asawasupachai, Ornanong Prateeppaisarn, Patompat Kamtar, Chananya Lauhabandhu, Jakrapong Kongmalai, Jitirath Supornjirapat

School of Communication Arts, Bangkok University, 9/1 Moo 5 Phaholyothin Road, Klong Nueng, Klong Luang, Pathum Thani 10120, Corresponding Email: patama.s@bu.ac.th

Abstract

The study delves into the challenges surrounding the factors that shape consumer intentions, willingness, and behaviours in purchasing green, environmentally friendly, and sustainable products and services. The research highlights the significance of demographic data as a critical component in understanding consumer tendencies, while also recognising the need to consider a range of other influential determinants. The objective of this study is twofold: firstly, to assess and analyse demographic groups that display varying levels of interest in sustainable products and services, thereby uncovering potential market segments; and secondly, to explore various additional factors that drive or hinder the desire to buy and use these eco-friendly options. Such factors may include environmental awareness, perceived barriers to sustainable consumption, cultural influences, economic conditions, societal pressures, and the like. To achieve these objectives, the study employed a documentary research method, gathering the top ten relevant studies published between 2023 and 2024. These were sourced using the Google Search engine, ensuring a broad and diverse collection of data. The selected samples represent studies conducted across different global regions, providing a comprehensive view of international consumer behaviour related to sustainability.

The study's findings uncovered key insights into the diverse motivations and obstacles influencing consumer choices for green products. These factors included demographics such as gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, and income, as well as cultural influences and more. These insights offer significant implications for both theoretical exploration and practical application in the field. These insights serve as a crucial resource for marketing scholars aiming to further academic research and understanding of sustainable consumption patterns. Additionally, they offer practical guidance for marketing professionals in crafting effective and targeted campaigns that resonate with different consumer demographics and promote sustainable purchasing behaviour. This research paves the way for developing innovative strategies that align with the growing consumer demand for eco-friendly solutions, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable future in the marketplace.

Keywords: *Demography, Cultural Dimensions, Sustainability, Green Marketing, Eco-Friendly Products*

1. Introduction

Sustainability is no longer a new concept; it has become ingrained consumer values. This can be attributed to environmental changes and crises and ecological degradation, which are largely driven by human activities. Without addressing these environmental concerns, there may be little left for future generations. According to Anitha & Vijai (2020), the green market should adopt a broad perspective before taking action. The importance of green products has started to raise awareness and contribute to sustainable development, which is crucial for future generations. Green marketing and products not only protect the environment but also educate the public on its preservation. Unlike traditional marketing, green marketing places greater emphasis on improving the world's ecosystem through environmental management, life cycle assessment, and industrial processes. A core value of green marketing is to offer long-term, non-financial benefits to society, rather than focusing solely on short-term financial gains.

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For effective green marketing, it is crucial that the four Ps—product, price, place, and promotion—align with environmentally friendly principles. A green product should integrate ecological considerations at every stage of production, including the use of recycled and reusable materials, while meeting customer needs. Regarding pricing, brands should invest significantly in creating and developing their green products to position them as premium offerings while effectively communicating this value to customers. The channels of distribution must also reflect sustainability, from the pick-up point to delivery and in-store placement. Brands should choose locations that align with their values and reputation, distinguishing themselves from competitors. Finally, green advertising and promotion through various sustainable programs and tools can enhance brand awareness and affinity, provided they avoid making exaggerated claims. Collaborating with green and sustainable organisations and agencies can also serve as a strategic communication approach (Khatri, 2021).

It is believed that various individuals and generations perceive sustainability from different perspectives, which can influence their desires to buy and utilise sustainable products and services. Apart from personal factors, at the same time, external factors can enhance the willingness to engage in green and sustainable experiences.

Currently, scholars and professionals cannot underestimate the importance of demographic data for effective consumer segmentation. According to Yadav and Kumari (2024), in sustainable marketing, companies can target specific segments, such as millennials or affluent consumers, who are more likely to engage in sustainable purchasing behaviours. By recognising demographic differences in attitudes toward sustainability, organisations can develop tailored marketing messages and services that effectively appeal to these consumer groups. An example of market segmentation that incorporates socio-demographic profiles to enhance consumer insights and personas categorizes environmentally-friendly food consumers into six segments: meat and fish eaters, origin-focused food savers, ambiguous consumers, food waste-reducing sharers, renouncement aversives, and pro-environmental consumers who are motivated by consequences (Funk, Sütterlin, & Siegrist, 2021). Above all, demographics are essential when developing a customer persona for a specific target audience. This understanding allows marketers to clearly identify and visualise their audience, helping them create tailored content and messaging.

From time to time, it is clear that many studies have utilised the Theory of Planned Behaviour, initiated by Ajzen (1991), to explore the determinants that encourage or discourage intentions and willingness to purchase sustainable, green, and environmentally friendly products and services. As demonstrated by Ajzen (1991), intentions to engage in various types of behaviours can be accurately predicted based on attitudes towards behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Actual behaviour is significantly influenced by this willingness, along with perceived behavioural control. While attitudes towards behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control correlate with specific beliefs about the behaviour, the precise nature of these relationships remains unclear. Likewise, these relationships can be enhanced by expectancy-value models, but their effectiveness is limited. However, optimising the scaling of expectancy-value can lead to improved outcomes. Furthermore, incorporating past behaviour into predictive models can test the adequacy of the theory, which is still a contentious issue (Ajzen, 1991).

For example, the study conducted by Kumar (2012) in India, revealed that environmental knowledge positively impacts attitudes towards sustainable commodities. The relationship between perceived behavioural control and purchase intention is weaker than that of attitudes towards sustainable products. Subjective norms did not significantly relate to purchase intention, while a positive connection exists between purchase intention and actual buying behaviour. Through the lens of young adults in Greece, moreover, attitudes towards green purchasing and green products have the most substantial impact on intentions to buy green. Nonetheless, the respondents held only moderately positive attitudes, which raises concerns about the effectiveness of "green declarations." Additionally, perceived behavioural control had a moderate significance, while subjective norms did not significantly predict purchasing intentions (Dima, 2013). Even within the extended theory of planned behaviour, aside from consumer subjective norms, in Taiwan, all other factors demonstrated significant positive correlations with planned behaviour. This easily suggests that the

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voluntary aspect of engaging in the green movement is more important than any social pressure to conform (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2020). These three studies demonstrate the weakest influence of subjective norms on the intention to purchase green, environmental, and sustainable products. It is also found the relationship between green personality – defined as the ability to integrate nature, humanity, and society (attitudes towards repurchasing behaviour on green products) – and consumers' willingness to repurchase environmentally friendly commodities (Ndofirepi & Matema, 2020). Recently, the results from Niloy et al., (2023) indicate that, in Bangladesh, the intention to purchase green products is influenced by brand attitude, perceived behavioural control, environmental concern, and digital communication. Digital communication also significantly affects brand attitude and subjective norms, while environmental concern has a passive influence. The study concludes that digital communication is the strongest predictor of purchase intention, whereas subjective norms have minimal impact. Despite subjective norms, from time to time, likely having a minimal influence, the latest study by Rukhsar and Khanam (2025) revealed all of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are significant predictors of purchase intention among Indian people. In contrast, environmental concern as one of the supplementary constructs are not significant predictors, while ethical obligation emerges as a strong predictor. Ultimately, it is established that consumer purchase behaviour is boosted by purchase intention.

Brands also are increasingly embracing sustainability communication campaigns to align with the values of modern consumers. While numerous studies have examined purchasing behaviour related to green and sustainable products and services, it is essential to discover the factors encouraging consumers' decisions to buy products and services for effective green marketing (Zhang & Dong, 2020). According to Doanh, Gadomska-Lila, & Loan (2021), likewise, ongoing efforts to understand the factors that influence green and sustainable purchasing behaviour have been made; however, previous studies often lack organisation, and cultural dimension have received limited attention. Thus, it is recommended to concentrate on the cultural impacts on green and sustainable consumption. In this context, there remains rooms for improvement and additional research into the factors influencing green, environmental, and sustainable purchase intentions and behaviours.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1) To examine and analyse demographics expressing varying levels of desire for sustainable products and services
2) To explore other factors that influenced the desire to buy and use sustainable products and services

3. Materials and Methods

Documentary research was conducted in this study using the Google Search Engine to identify relevant studies. Based on purposive sampling, the selected papers were required to meet the following criteria: 1) they must be published in English; 2) they must full-texted; 3) due to time constraints, the abstracts of the samples were primarily reviewed and analysed. When the abstracts lacked sufficient detail or clarity, the full texts were referenced additionally 4) they must have been published in 2023-2024; 5) they must address both research objectives or at least one of them; 6) regardless of the countries where the studies were conducted, all would be included in this research; 7) the selected samples did not specifically address green, environmentally friendly, or sustainable purchasing intentions and behaviours; 8) both of consumers' purchasing intentions and behaviours were considered; 9) only those ten samples that met the previously outlined criteria were included in this study; 10) the samples were selected from the top ten results displayed on Google Search; and 11) any papers that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the analysis. The researchers had been inquired about the various studies used as units of analysis in this research. They would like to emphasise that the ten studies included were sourced from a diverse range of countries, spanning from the East to the West.

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The researchers used the keywords "demographic factors influencing levels of intention and desire for sustainable products and services" for their searches. The ten samples were listed in Appendix.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of this study were presented in alignment with the two research objectives: first, examining the demographic profiles that influenced sustainable purchasing behaviours for eco-friendly products, and second, identifying other determinants that affected the willingness to buy and utilise sustainable products and services.

4.1 The demographic profiles influencing sustainable purchasing behaviours for eco-friendly products

The analysis of the ten samples indicated that demographic profiles served as fundamental antecedents for understanding insights into green, environmentally friendly, and sustainable intentions and behaviours. However, three studies only presented descriptive statistics regarding the demographic profiles of the sampled consumers, lacking inferential statistics (Mabkhot, 2024; Fenta, Singh, & Gautam, 2023; Suhaeni et al., 2024). While these studies were presented only through descriptive statistics, they successfully identified the target groups associated with green, eco-friendly, and sustainable issues. Notably, the studies conducted by Mabkhot, 2024, Fenta et al., 2023, and Suhaeni et al., (2024) revealed that concerns about environmental sustainability were common among younger individuals with bachelor's degrees and relatively low incomes. Both single (Suhaeni et al., 2024) and married individuals (Fenta et al., 2023), likewise, were included.

For the remaining studies, demographic profiles were treated as independent variables (Chatterjee, Alam, & Singh, 2024; Kumar, 2023; Yener, Secer, & Ghazalian, 2023; Reddy et al., 2023; Horani & Dong, 2023; Liang, 2024), while the study by Kassim, Athirah, & Setijaningrum (2023) obviously analysed demographics, including gender and educational attainment, as moderating factors. Similarly, not all demographic profiles were examined, whether as independent variables or moderating factors. Regardless of statistical influences, gender, age, and educational attainment served as moderating factors in the study by Kassim et al., (2023). Similarly, the study of Liang (2024) focused on the effects of gender, age, and educational attainment. In the study of Chatterjee et al. (2024), demographic factors were, furthermore, expanded to include gender, age, educational background, and income. Researches had examined gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, and income (Kumar, 2023; Horani & Dong, 2023), while another study analysed age, educational attainment, and income (Yener et al., 2023). Additionally, gender, age, and educational attainment were explored in study (Reddy et al., 2023). Regardless of whether demographics were considered as moderating or independent factors, moverover, most studies demonstrated the effects of these various demographic profiles, with the exception of the study by Yener et al. (2023).

Simultaneously, different dependent variables, or models, were employed, primarily focusing on the theory of planned behaviour. For this space, the researchers aimed to present more detailed findings.

The study conducted by Chatterjee et al. (2024) provided valuable insights into sustainable consumers. The data revealed that most respondents in Kolkata intended to purchase environmentally friendly products, primarily seeking information online and purchasing from home-based vendors. Families with incomes between Rs. 70,001 and Rs. 150,000 tended to favour roadside vendors, while those with higher incomes opted for specialised handicraft stores. Men generally shopped at roadside vendors, whereas specialty shops were preferred by women. Residents aged 36 to 56 were willing to spend between Rs. 600 and 1,000 on items such as baskets, especially those aged 36 to 50, who showed a greater readiness to pay higher prices. Gender also affected spending habits; men typically budget Rs. 500 or less, while women were inclined to spend more. The findings indicated that purses and showpieces were the most popular products, followed by baskets and wall hangings, with lower demand for seats and boxes. To cater to market preferences, product offerings should focus on wall hangings, bags, showpieces, and baskets, demonstrating Kolkata's strong interest in unique eco-friendly products.

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According to Kassim et al., (2023), this quantitative study effectively applied the Theory of Planned Behavior to data from the Petaling District, demonstrating that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control significantly influenced intentions to purchase environmentally sustainable products. Gender and education level served as moderating factors, with gender showing mixed results. Age moderated the relationships for attitude and subjective norms but not for perceived behavioural control, while education positively impacted all of the Theory of Planned Behavior components and purchasing intentions regarding sustainable products.

Presented by Kumar (2023), demographic factors significantly influenced consumer attitudes towards green durable products. The study found a strong correlation between demographics and factors like environmental concerns, awareness, perceived consumer effectiveness, and social norms. Mature, married males showed particularly high awareness, with education and income also playing key roles. The impact of these factors was notably greater than in Delhi, underscoring the importance of demographics in shaping attitudes towards green durable products.

The study by Reddy et al., (2023) found that consumer perceptions of green marketing for eco-friendly fast-moving consumer goods differed significantly by gender, age, and educational attainment. However, no statistical differences were noted among individuals with different marital statuses.

Horani and Dong (2023) studied the impact of five sociodemographic factors—gender, marital status, education, age, and income—on smartphone purchasing behaviour. They found that men over 41 years old with advanced degrees and incomes of 4,001 to 6,000 RMB significantly favoured sustainable smartphones, showing greater environmental awareness and less price sensitivity. In contrast, younger consumers aged 20 to 30 prioritised reliability and memory over sustainability due to their price sensitivity and lower incomes of 2,000 to 4,000 RMB. Perceived sustainable value factors—social, functional, and emotional—positively influenced purchase intentions and mediated relationships with sustainable and traditional requirements. While price sensitivity negatively affected traditional smartphone choices, it did not impact the positive relationship between sustainable requirements and purchase intention. Overall, consumers valuing sustainable designs tend to be less price-sensitive and are willing to pay more for eco-friendly and sustainable smartphones.

Liang (2024) highlighted that the positive link between education level and green purchasing behaviour stems from increased awareness and environmental consciousness. Higher education enhanced critical thinking and provides better information on environmental issues, enabling informed choices. Educated individuals, often with greater financial resources, are more likely to prioritise sustainable products. Additionally, gender and age influenced green purchasing behaviour; women generally preferred eco-friendly products, while younger generations like Millennials and Generation Z showed heightened environmental awareness due to technology and education. Life stages also mattered, as financial concerns might overshadow sustainability for young adults. In other words, understanding green purchasing behaviour required considering individual differences, life stages, and societal changes. Targeted sustainability initiatives must address these diverse factors, along with situational influences, subjective norms, and positive social impacts on attitudes toward eco-friendly consumption.

In contrast, the study by Yener et al. (2023) found that demographic characteristics, such as age, education, and income, were not statistically significant predictors of green product purchases. According to the Motivation–Opportunity–Ability (MOA) framework, the findings revealed that consumers' motivation, capabilities, and awareness of sustainability significantly influenced their purchasing behaviour toward green products. In contrast, the availability of opportunities had little impact on their buying decisions.

Conclusively, it was crucial not to underestimate the importance of demographic profiles, Researchers should not assume that no differences existed between groups until hypotheses were validated (Hammer, 2011). Similarly, Ray (2020) emphasised the significance of collecting demographic data for a multiple of rationales. Collecting demographic data was essential for reducing false positives and accurately assessing related issues, thereby preventing misallocated resources. It ensured representative samples in studies, particularly vaccines, to avoid skewed results. Moreover, neglecting this data could lead to the

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historical exclusion of certain groups, undermining transparency and equity. Insufficient demographic information could, therefore, result in flawed research, weaken public services, and hinder innovation in a country.

4.2 Other determinants that affected the willingness to buy and utilise sustainable products and services

Cultural determinants, additionally, played a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour and perceptions, and therefore, they warranted further exploration in future research. This importance was underscored by the findings of Yener et al., (2023), which focused on a sample in Greece and found no statistical differences in demographic factors concerning consumer intentions, willingness, and behaviours related to green purchasing. This lacked of significant findings suggested that cultural context might profoundly influence these outcomes, potentially masking the effects of demographic characteristics. In contrast, studies predominantly conducted in Asia, i.e. India (Chatterjee et al., 2024; Kumar, 2023; Reddy et al., 2023), Malaysia (Kassim et al., 2023), Saudi Arabi (Mabkhot, 2024), China (Horani & Dong, 2023), probably Thailand (Liang, 2024), and Indonesia (Suhaeni et al., 2024) and one country in Africa like Ethiopia (Fenta et al., 2023) had consistently demonstrated significant statistical differences across various demographic factors, indicating that culture was likely to significantly affect how consumers from different regions perceived and engaged with sustainability and eco-friendly products. The variations in results highlighted the need to delve deeper into cultural determinants that influenced consumer behaviour, as they might uncover insights that could aid in developing more tailored marketing strategies and initiatives. Although only one study was identified (i.e., Yener et al., 2023), it could provide valuable insights into the reasons behind the lack of statistical differences in demographics within Western countries and contexts. Similarly, the study by Yener et al., (2023) utilised the Motivation-Opportunity-Ability (MOA) framework, which distinguished it from other studies, as discussed in the next paragraph. This difference might contribute to unique findings. Therefore, it was valuable to explore various models and theories to provide broader and more insightful perspectives on green, eco-friendly, and sustainable willingness and behaviours.

In addition to demographic and cultural determinants, other factors need to be further examined, including those related to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Kassim et al., 2023; Kumar, 2023; Fenta et al., 2023; Suhaeni et al., 2024). Moreover, factors such as environmental concerns and awareness (Kumar, 2023; Mabkhot, 2024; Horani & Dong, 2023), price sensitivity (Mabkhot, 2024; Horani & Dong, 2023), social influence (Liang, 2024), and other determinants like perceived consumer effectiveness (Kumar, 2023), along with product value, quality, and trust (Mabkhot, 2024), as well as sustainable value factors (Horani & Dong, 2023), warrant further investigation. Furthermore, the Motivation-Opportunity-Ability (MOA) framework was highlighted in the study by (Yener et al., 2023).

Overall, situations related to demographic profiles and even other relevant factors could be analysed through two key theories in sociology: Zero Population Growth by Paul Ehrlich (1968) and Cornucopian Theory by Simon (1981). Paul Ehrlich, a neo-Malthusian researcher, adapted Malthus's concepts for modern times, emphasising that environmental health is crucial, not just food supply. He cautioned that population growth could lead to environmental collapse due to resource depletion and pollution from the wealthy. In contrast, Cornucopian Theory countered the pessimistic view that a growing population would face survival challenges, arguing that human innovation can address environmental and social issues. It suggested that agricultural scientists will continue to enhance food production, symbolizing abundance and the belief that human creativity will meet our needs (in Lumen Learning, n.d.). The findings of this study were likely to contradict the Zero Population Growth theory, showing that consumers, regardless of their demographics, tend to favour eco-friendly products. Conversely, the results aligned more closely with Cornucopian Theory, suggesting that despite differences in demographic influences and other determinants, there would be a greater willingness to care for the environment and society as a whole.

Future research should aim to identify specific cultural values, beliefs, and practices that inform consumer decisions related to green products and sustainability. By examining these cultural factors in greater detail, researchers and marketers can better understand how to resonate with consumers on a cultural level,

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leading to more effective communication and engagement in promoting sustainable consumption practices. Understanding cultural determinants will not only enrich the academic literature but also enhance the practical application of sustainability initiatives across diverse consumer demographics.

5. Conclusion

The primary aim of this study is to motivate researchers across both the sciences and social sciences to incorporate demographic profiles into their research by employing both descriptive and inferential statistics. By doing so, they can better understand the nuances and complexities of consumer intention and behaviour. Furthermore, it is recommended that researchers investigate additional determinants including environmental concerns and awareness, perceived barriers to environmentally friendly and sustainable consumption, cultural determinants, economic conditions, societal pressures, and the like that may influence consumer purchasing intentions, willingness, and behaviours toward green, environmentally friendly, and sustainable products.

Exploring these factors can yield profound insights, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of what drives consumer choices in this area. Such data is not only beneficial for advancing academic knowledge but is also invaluable for marketers in effectively targeting their current and potential customers. By leveraging this information, marketers can tailor their strategies to align with consumer preferences and values, ultimately promoting more sustainable purchasing practices and enhancing their market reach.

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Appendix
A list of the samples used as a unit of analysis

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