



Green Apparel Buying Behaviour: Opportunities in Indian Market



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Abstract

This review examines the factors affecting organic clothing purchase behaviour. Review of literature reveals that past green buying behaviour, peer influence, green apparel knowledge were important for consumers. However, several studies posit that awareness about environmental problems does not necessarily translate into green buying. Organic clothing purchase behaviour can be influenced by several factors like green attitudes, self-identity, past experience with green products and social groups.

Keywords: Green knowledge; Green peer influence; Green apparel buying; Indian youth

Introduction

Most studies in green buying behaviour discuss the importance of environment friendly attitudes, awareness about environmental problems, and psychological factors in predicting consumers' behaviour for green products [1-3]. Several researchers posit that knowledge about environmental problems does not necessarily translate into green product purchase [4,5]. In emerging economies, like India, growing environmental problems have led government to promote green awareness and practices [6-9]. In similar vein, the current study analyzes the organic clothing trends in Indian market. Indian apparel industry is growing at a fast pace. Press releases suggest that it is valued at \$40 billion and estimated to grow to a \$124 billion market by 2020 [10]. Changing lifestyle, increase in the number of women in workforce, availability of global apparel brands in the country, rising income, awareness about global fashion trends has led to growth of the apparel industry [11,12]. Recent years have witnessed an interest in organic apparel and it contributes around five percent of the total apparel market [13]. Many national and international apparel manufacturers like Wills Lifestyle, Van Heusen, Benetton, S Kumar's Nationwide and Arrow have introduced organic apparel lines by using recycled fibers to produce organic clothing [14]. Apparel brand like levis has launched eco denims for both men and women while Van Heusen and Arrow have launched organic clothing brands [14,15]. Government and apparel manufacturers are taking initiatives to develop technologies that reduce carbon emissions [16]. The factors identified from the study can help in formulating research plan to conduct a systematic quantitative research to understand green apparel buying behaviour. Indian green apparel market is growing and understanding the purchase behaviour, product choice related

factors, and psychological factors would provide information to apparel companies.

Green buying behaviour

In previous studies researcher have discussed the importance of several factors like attitudes, values, past buying behaviour, lifestyle, personality, peer influence, and product attributes on green buying behaviour [17-26].

Social conformance, group identity, and personal values have been reported to be important predictors to environmentally friendly behaviour. Kalafatis et al. [27] applied the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to compare environmental attitudes of Greek and British consumers. They state that beliefs and social norms influenced intention to purchase green products. Kim & Chung [28] found that environmental and appearance consciousness and past experiences with other organic products influenced attitudes towards green products. Similarly, Cheah & Phau [29] reported that environmental norms/values influenced purchase of environmentally friendly products. Environmental knowledge and past experience with green products was important in predicting environment friendly behaviour [30-33]. Mostafa [23] stated that though people professed awareness about environment related problems, it did not translate into willingness to purchase green products.

Green apparel purchase behaviour

Several studies have discussed the importance of organic clothing as a means of supporting green values. It helped in showing one's commitment towards environment. The decision to

purchase organic clothing depends on several factors like concern for environmental problems, social norms, green lifestyle, and trust in green products. Research in different countries posits growing awareness about green products. Personality, lifestyle, and attitude towards environment were important in predicting intention to purchase green products. Gam [34] found that consumers' fashion orientation, shopping styles, environmental concern, and eco-friendly behaviour predicted their preference for organic clothing. In another research, Gam et al. [35] studied role of consumer characteristics on willingness to pay for kids' organic clothing. They found that environmental concern, green buying and recycling behaviour influenced mothers' intention to buy organic clothing for kids. They were not willing to pay premium prices for purchasing organic clothing. Lin [36] characterized environmental shopping attitudes under four dimensions: involvement in an environmental organization or other environmental protection activities, consumption of organic food, interest in the fabric content label prior to the purchase of a garment, and past purchase of organic apparels. Environmentally conscious consumers were willing to pay higher price for organic clothing [37].

In a research conducted on Indian consumers' organic clothing purchase, Khare & Varshneya [38] studied the influence of past green buying, green apparel knowledge and peer influence on organic clothing purchase behaviour of Indian youth. The findings provided interesting insight and differ from earlier studies on green buying that argue the importance of social influence and green norms [25,27-29,39]. Indian youth's past experience with green products and brands enabled them to appreciate the relevance of organic clothing. Since peer influence had no impact on organic clothing purchase behaviour of youth, it could imply that organic clothing helped in expressing one's commitment towards environment and therefore views of others was not important. Organic clothing is a reflection of one's environmental friendly values and seeking conformance from others was not considered necessary. The research posits that past experience with other organic products and brands is likely to influence future purchase behaviour. It may imply the relevance of green lifestyle where youth wish to endorse green values. Drawing from Niinimäki's [40] study on eco-clothing, it is argued that consumers' ethical values and attitudes influence their green apparel buying decisions. Relating with environmental identity theory, purchasing green apparels enabled youth to differentiate themselves. It helped in projecting a pro-environmental and eco-friendly self-identity. Therefore, consumers' desire to conform to social norms was not relevant. It

can be interpreted that youth symbolize green apparel as products which bestow pro-environmental identity. For some youth it may be 'fashionable' to project an environmentally friendly identity. For youth not interested in green apparel, factors such as style, price, brand name, and fashion may be important, and green apparel may not fit in their evoked set of needs.

The findings of the research can help organic clothing manufacturers and retailers to position and market their clothing brands. Since, youth comprises of a large segment that purchases clothing brands and is conscious about latest fashions and styles, organic clothing manufacturers should design promotions to educate youth about advantages of organic clothing and its impact on environment. The organic clothing brands can be related to environmental friendly values and lifestyles [41,42]. Promotional campaigns should educate and inform people about impact of textile manufacturing and dyeing processes on environment. Social initiatives like environment awareness camps, exhibitions of organic clothing, and fabrics that could be recycled could help in communicating the benefits. Organic clothing brands could use national and international designers as opinion leaders to communicate benefits of organic clothing. Latest designs and styles should be introduced to appeal to young consumers. The premium value of organic clothing lines can be emphasized by designing garments that are latest in line with global fashions.

Branding of green apparel lines by apparel firms would help in changing consumers' perception about organic products. Quality, price, and style aspects can be better managed through brands. Promotion of organic clothing can be done in fashion shows and other national apparel events. This would create awareness about organic apparels. Celebrities can be used to promote organic clothing lines. The organic clothing brands should focus on strengthening the attributes most important for youth.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to understand the role of various factors that influence organic clothing buying behaviour like past green buying, green attitudes, values, green self-identity and peer influence on green buying. It investigates the role of these factors on organic clothing purchase. Future research can be directed in understanding these factors in context of organic clothing purchase. Primary research can help in understanding consumers' ecological beliefs. Specific green apparel brands, their prices, styles and promotions can be taken to understand their influence on consumers' attitude towards green apparel (Appendix).

Appendix

	Consumers' Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence Scale (Bearden et al. [41])	Results of Qualitative Study
1	I rarely purchase the latest fashions products until I'm sure my friends approve of them.	Removed
2	It is important that others like the products and brands that I buy.	Removed
3	When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	Retained
4	If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy.	Retained

5	I like to know what brands and products make good impression on others.	Retained
6	I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.	Retained
7	If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that others purchase.	Retained
8	I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.	Retained
9	To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using.	Retained
10	If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product.	Retained
11	I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class.	Retained
12	I frequently gather information from friends and family about a product before I buy.	Retained
Peer Influence in Green Context Scale (Lee [25])		
13	I have learnt a lot about environmental issues from my friends.	Retained
14	My friends often discuss about the environmental issues/products with me.	Retained
15	My friends, often, recommend environment friendly products to me.	Retained
16	My friends often go shopping for green products with me.	Retained
17	My friends often share their experiences and knowledge about green products with me.	Retained
Green Gauge Past Buying Behaviour Scale (Pickett-Baker [30])		
18	I use biodegradable soaps or detergents.	Retained
19	I avoid buying aerosol products.	Retained
20	I read labels to see if contents are environmentally safe.	Retained
21	I buy products made or packaged in recycled materials.	Retained
22	I buy products in packages that can be refilled.	Retained
23	I avoid buying products from companies which are not environmentally responsible.	Retained
24	I recycle bottles, cans or glass.	Removed
25	I recycle newspapers.	Retained
26	I compost garden waste.	Retained
27	I take my own bags to the market.	Retained
28	I try to cut down on car use.	Retained
29	I contribute money to environmental causes.	Retained
30	I am a volunteer for an environmental group.	Retained
31	I write to politicians about environmental problems.	Retained
Green Apparel Knowledge Scale (Kim [42]; Phua [3])		
32	Chemical pollutants are produced during manufacturing of synthetic or manufactured fibres such as polyester.	Retained
33	Chemical pollutants are not produced during processing of natural fibers such as cotton.	Retained
34	Regionally mandated standards for clean air and water have not yet been imposed on textile companies.	Retained
35	Air pollution can occur during some common dye processes of textiles.	Removed
36	Dyeing and finishing processes use lot of water.	Retained
37	Fibers such as wool cannot be commercially recycled.	Retained
38	Disposable diapers have substantially contributed to the quantity of textile products discarded in landfills.	Retained
39	Special finishes on fabrics may create problems for recycling.	Retained
40	Phosphate-containing detergents can be a source of water pollution.	Retained
41	Natural fibers are usually bio-degradable.	Retained
42	The use of larger quantities of natural fibers will significantly decrease energy consumption.	Retained

Green Apparel Buying Behaviour Scale (Kim & Damhorst [42])		
43	I buy apparel made from recycled material.	Retained
44	I buy second-hand apparel.	Retained
45	I purposely select fabrics that require cooler washing temperature, shorter drying time, or less ironing.	Retained
46	I avoid an apparel product because of environmental concerns.	Retained
47	I select apparel that I can wear over a longer term compared to trendy apparel that goes out of style quickly.	Retained
48	I buy clothing made of organically grown natural fibers.	Retained
49	I buy apparel with low impact or no dye processing.	Retained
50	I buy apparel with environmentally friendly labeling or packaging techniques.	Retained

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