

Determinants of Green Purchase Intention Among Educated Consumers: A Review of the Literature

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Abstract: Green purchase intention (GPI) has become a central construct in sustainable-consumption research, yet a persistent gap remains between consumers' pro-environmental attitudes and their actual purchasing. This review synthesises the published literature on the determinants of GPI among educated consumers, organising the evidence around six recurring factors: environmental awareness, subjective norms, perceived behavioural effectiveness, eco-label trust, price sensitivity, and product availability. The synthesis suggests that individual-cognitive drivers such as awareness and institutional trust are consistently influential, while normative and economic factors show more context-dependent effects. The review closes with a proposed integrative framework and an agenda for future research.

Keywords: green purchase intention; environmental awareness; eco-label trust; subjective norms; price sensitivity; Theory of Planned Behaviour; sustainable consumption

1. Introduction

Environmental degradation and climate change have increased academic and policy interest in how consumers can be motivated to adopt more sustainable consumption patterns.

However, in spite of this growth, the literature is characterized by a well-documented attitude–behaviour gap: consumers have strong pro-environmental intentions that do not often translate into purchases.

2. Review Methodology

This paper adopts a narrative review approach, based on the principles of systematic literature review. Academic databases and publisher platforms were searched using combinations of search terms, including green purchase intention, green purchasing behaviour, eco-label trust, subjective norms, price sensitivity, and product availability, to identify relevant peer-reviewed studies.

2.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Consistent with the review practice in the management and human-factor fields, the criteria for source selection were: Inclusion: English language, peer-reviewed journal articles and systematic reviews; studies that discussed one or more of the six focal determinants of green purchase intention; and studies that were grounded in established behavioral or consumer theory.

3. Theoretical Foundations

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) states that behavioural intention is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Systematic reviews have established that the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), along with the Theory of Reasoned Action, remains the most validated model

in green-purchase research and the model is often extended to resolve the attitude-behaviour inconsistency by including constructs from the Norm Activation Model and other approaches.

The VBN theory complements TPB by linking environmental values to ecological beliefs and personal moral norms, bringing forward the moral and identity-based dimensions of green consumption that purely cognitive models can understate.

4. Determinants of Green Purchase Intention

4.1 Environmental Awareness

One of the most consistently cited antecedents of GPI is environmental awareness, which is a consumer’s knowledge of and concern for environmental issues. The relationship is not deterministic, as awareness often co-exists with the attitude–behaviour gap, indicating that it is a necessary but not sufficient factor, and its effect is conditioned by trust, price and availability.

4.2 Subjective Norms

Subjective norms, the perceived social pressure to engage in green purchasing from significant others, have been given a central place in TPB-based research, and social norms and reference groups are listed among the significant determinants of GPI in systematic reviews. The empirical record is mixed: many studies have reported a positive normative effect, but some have found weak or inconsistent relationships, and the strength of normative influence seems to vary across cultural and product contexts.

4.3 Perceived Behavioural Effectiveness

Perceived behavioural effectiveness is the belief that one’s own choices can meaningfully impact the environment, and is closely related to TPB’s perceived behavioural control. Empirical work shows that perceived behaviour control can have a relatively high effect on green buying intention and that consumers who believe that their actions matter are more likely to have green purchase intentions.

4.4 Eco-Label Trust

Research shows that greater trust in eco-labels is related to a greater likelihood of purchasing organic and green products. The credibility of sustainability labels has both direct and indirect positive impacts on GPI, often mediated by environmental trust. Greenwashing can erode consumer trust and dilute the label-to-intention association and greenwashing awareness moderates the influence of label credibility.

4.5 Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity is consistently identified as a key barrier in the attitude–behaviour gap. Green products usually cost more, and consumers, while willing to buy eco-friendly products, are often not willing to pay substantially more.

4.6 Product Availability

Situational constraints on the intention-behaviour link include the availability of green products and the convenience of obtaining them. Reviews say that limited availability and convenience are barriers that further widen the gap between positive attitudes and actual purchases, and that these barriers are especially pronounced in developing markets.

Table 1. Conceptual and Empirical Definitions of Constructs

Construct	Conceptual definition	Empirical definition (measurement)
Green Purchase Intention (GPI)	A consumer's stated willingness or plan to buy environmentally friendly products.	Multi-item Likert scales capturing willingness/intention to buy green products in the near future.

Construct	Conceptual definition	Empirical definition (measurement)
Environmental Awareness (EA)	Knowledge of and concern for environmental issues and the impact of one's consumption.	Likert items on awareness of environmental impact and being informed about environmental issues.
Subjective Norms (SN)	Perceived social pressure from significant others to engage in green purchasing.	Likert items on whether important others think one should buy green products.
Perceived Behavioural Effectiveness (PBE)	Belief that one's individual choices can make a meaningful environmental difference.	Likert items on whether one's green purchases help protect the environment.
Eco-label Trust (ELT)	Confidence in the credibility and reliability of eco-labels and certifications.	Likert items on trust in, and credibility of, eco-label claims.
Price Sensitivity (PS)	The degree to which price influences willingness to buy green products.	Likert items on responsiveness to green price premiums; often modelled as a moderator.
Product Availability (PA)	The ease of finding and procuring green products.	Likert items on accessibility and range of green products where one shops.

5. Synthesis and Research Gaps

Table 2. Summary of Determinants and Evidence

Determinant	Typical effect on GPI	Consistency of evidence
Environmental awareness	Positive	Consistent as a driver, but tempered by the attitude–behaviour gap.
Subjective norms	Positive	Mixed; effect varies across cultures and product categories.
Perceived behavioural effectiveness	Positive	Generally supported; sensitive to perceived effort/convenience.
Eco-label trust	Positive	Supported, but eroded by greenwashing and label proliferation.
Price sensitivity	Negative (moderator)	Largely a barrier; some counter-intuitive positive findings.
Product availability	Positive (enabler)	Supported as a situational constraint, strongest in developing markets.

5.1 Gaps Identified

Table 3 uses the LGPR approach to link each gap to the source that unveils it, linking important reviewed publications to the knowledge gaps they unveil.

Table 3. Mapping of Reviewed Publications to Knowledge Gaps

Reviewed publication	Knowledge gap identified
Sharma, Aswal & Paul (2023), Business Strategy and the Environment	Confirms an attitude–behaviour gap but notes limited quantitative evidence on the mechanisms that connect intention to actual behaviour.
Srivastava & Gupta (2023), Business Strategy and the Environment	Price sensitivity, government interventions and availability show negative interaction effects, yet how these constraints operate across demographic and cultural segments remains underexplored.
Patino-Toro et al. (2024), Sustainable Environment	Green purchase intention is studied unevenly across countries; how determinants manifest in different cultural and socio-economic contexts needs further exploration.
Eco-label trust / greenwashing studies (2022–2026)	Trust drives intention, but greenwashing awareness and the proliferation of competing labels erode and complicate the trust pathway; measurement of contemporary digital social influence is largely absent.

6. Proposed Framework and Future Research Agenda

Based on the evidence reviewed, this paper develops a framework where environmental awareness, subjective norms, perceived behavioural effectiveness and eco-label trust antecede GPI, whereas price sensitivity and product availability serve as moderating constraints on the intention pathway and eco-label trust partially mediates the link between awareness and intention. Future research should: (i) test this framework using cross-national, multi-group samples to clarify contextual moderation; (ii) use longitudinal designs to address the attitude–behaviour gap causally; (iii) develop measures of contemporary digital social influence; and (iv) explore how greenwashing and label proliferation condition the trust pathway.

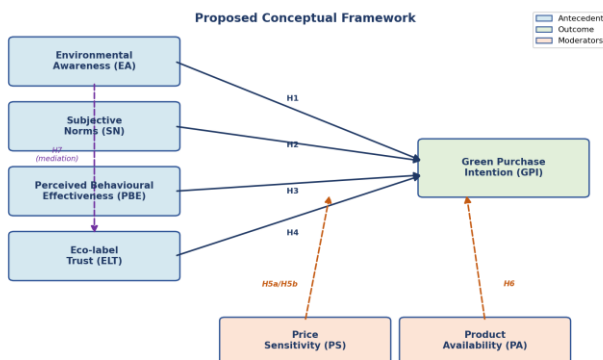


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework of green purchase intention determinants. Solid arrows denote hypothesised direct effects (H1–H4); the dashed purple arrow denotes the mediation path (H7); dashed orange arrows denote moderation (H5a, H5b, H6).

7. Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals

It speaks directly to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by clarifying the drivers of sustainable purchasing; supports SDG 13 (Climate Action) by linking green consumption to reduced environmental impact; and connects to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by attending to product availability and access.

8. Conclusion

The literature is convergent in taking the view that green purchase intention among educated consumers is most consistently driven by individual awareness and institutional trust, with perceived behavioural effectiveness generally supportive, while normative and economic factors have more context-dependent effects. Persistent contradictions, especially regarding subjective norms and price, and a persistent attitude–behaviour gap suggest that the field would benefit from context-sensitive, longitudinal, and cross-cultural research, and from more recent measurement of social influence.

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