

The Influence of Social Norms and Environmental Attitudes on Eco-Friendly Product Adoption

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Abstract

People everywhere are starting to pay more attention to the environment, and you can see it in how they shop. Climate change isn't some distant worry anymore—it's right in our faces. Folks care about what their purchases mean for the planet. But even with this awareness, there's a weird gap: people say they want to help the environment, but when it comes time to buy, they don't always follow through. Researchers call this the value-action gap. This paper looks at how our attitudes about the environment and what we think others expect of us—or social norms—shape whether or not we actually choose eco-friendly products. Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as a guide, I dug through research and industry reports from the past decade to figure out what's really going on. Turns out, social norms are the secret sauce: they help turn good intentions into real action. Seeing other people go green gives us the little push we need—even when eco-friendly options cost a bit more. Descriptive and injunctive norms reduce uncertainty and make people feel like they're doing what's expected. If you're in marketing or policy-making, you'll want to pay attention—using social cues and relatable stories can nudge people toward greener choices.

Keywords: Eco-Friendly Products, Social Norms, Environmental Attitude, Sustainable Consumption, Green Marketing, Consumer Behaviour

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Introduction

The world's shifting toward sustainable living, and it shows. What used to be niche is now front and center in consumer markets. Businesses see new opportunities, but also new challenges. Climate change has put pressure on everyone—not just companies but shoppers, too. Today, most people know that their choices, even small ones, have environmental consequences. That's part of why demand for eco-friendly products keeps rising—these items are designed to be easy on the planet, from the factory floor to your doorstep and beyond.

But here's the rub: just caring about the environment doesn't mean you always buy the green option. That's the value-action gap in a nutshell. Costs, convenience, and whether you can even find the eco-friendly choice all get in the way. Social norms—our sense of

what’s “normal” or expected in our communities—also shape whether we actually follow through. If you see everyone around you using a reusable water bottle or driving an electric car, you start to think, “Yeah, maybe I should do that too.”

The main goal of this research is to figure out how environmental attitudes and social expectations come together to push—or block—the adoption of eco-friendly products. By digging into academic studies and other reliable sources, I’m aiming to shine a light on the reasons people do (and don’t) buy green.

Literature Review

Environmental Consciousness

When we talk about someone’s environmental consciousness, we mean their attitudes, values, and beliefs about nature and their own impact on it. This shapes how much they prioritize eco-friendly behaviors in daily life. Plenty of research shows that people who care about the environment are more likely to recycle, use less energy, and buy green products—even if those options are pricier or harder to access. Environmental attitudes usually have three sides: the facts people know, how they feel emotionally, and their willingness to take action. People might really get why the environment matters and worry about it, but that doesn’t always translate to buying green. High prices, lack of choices, or just the hassle can put them off.

Social Norms and Consumer Behaviour

Social norms play a crucial role in shaping individual behaviour. They represent the shared expectations within a social group about what behaviours are acceptable or desirable.

Social norms are powerful. They set expectations—written or unwritten—for what we’re supposed to do. In consumer research, we usually break them into two types. Descriptive norms describe what most people actually do (“My neighbors recycle, so I guess I should, too”). Injunctive norms are about what people think you ought to do (“People think it’s wrong to litter”). When eco-friendly behavior is common in your group, you’re more likely to join in. Social proof works especially well when you’re not sure what’s right. Injunctive norms, on the other hand, play into our need to fit in and avoid looking bad—nobody wants to be the one messing up the planet while everyone else is trying to help. These influences are everywhere now, thanks to social media. Influencers, online groups, and viral posts showcase sustainable choices, making green living look cool and desirable.

Theoretical Framework: Theory of Planned Behaviour

This study leans on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which explains how attitudes, social pressures, and whether we feel in control affect what we end up doing. The theory boils down to three things:

1. Attitude toward the behaviour: how someone feels about engaging in the behaviour, whether positively or negatively.
2. Subjective norms: perceived social pressure from significant persons to engage in or refrain from the behaviour.
3. The person’s assessment of their capacity to carry out the behaviour is known as perceived behavioural control. Because it incorporates both social impacts and individual psychological aspects, the TPB is especially pertinent to the research of eco-friendly product uptake.

TPB is a solid fit for this topic. It helps untangle how personal values, social expectations, and practical barriers mix together when we’re deciding whether to bring home an eco-friendly product.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a systematic review to examine the influence of social norms and environmental attitudes on the adoption of eco-friendly products. The research relies on secondary data sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, meta-analyses, and industry reports published between 2010 and 2024.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

Using keywords like eco-friendly products, sustainable consumption, societal norms, environmental attitudes, and green marketing, the material was gathered from scholarly sources like Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science.

The selection of the studies was based on their publication in respectable academic publications, methodological quality, and relevance to the research objectives. Although qualitative research providing theoretical insights were also included, quantitative studies looking at behavioural results were given priority.

Analytical Approach

The chosen material was analysed using a thematic synthesis approach. Environmental views, social conventions, obstacles to the adoption of eco-friendly products, and marketing implications were among the major topics found during the investigation.

Understanding the connections between attitudes and social norms, including potential moderating and interaction effects, was the main goal of the investigation. Additionally, taken into account were contextual elements including product categories, cultural variations, and demographic traits.

Findings and Analysis

Environmental Attitudes and Consumer Orientation

Preservation-oriented and utilization-oriented viewpoints are two broad categories of environmental attitudes. While utilization-oriented customers concentrate on effective and sustainable resource usage that meets human needs, preservation-oriented consumers place a higher priority on biodiversity conservation and environmental protection.

Social Norms' Impact

By offering social proof and lowering perceived risk when implementing new environmentally friendly items, descriptive norms have an impact on behavior. Customers are more inclined to view sustainable product choices as advantageous and acceptable when they witness their peers adopting them widely. In visible product categories like eco-friendly clothing, electric cars, and reusable packaging, where consumption decisions reflect social ideals and individual identities, this effect is especially pronounced.

Interaction Between Attitudes and Social Norms

Environmental attitudes and social norms work together and bump up each other's impact. People with strong values and supportive groups jump on eco-friendly products faster. But even if someone isn't that eco-conscious, strong social norms can nudge them in a greener direction just by making them feel like they belong.

Obstacles to the Adoption of Eco-Friendly Products

Adoption of eco-friendly products is nevertheless constrained by a number of obstacles, despite growing environmental consciousness. The “green premium,” or the greater cost of sustainable products relative to conventional alternatives, is a significant obstacle.

Additionally, consumers can believe that eco-friendly items are less practical or efficient than conventional ones. However, these worries might be lessened and adoption encouraged by seeing contented users on social networks.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that eco-friendly product adoption is influenced by the interaction between individual environmental attitudes and social norms. While environmental attitudes provide the psychological foundation for sustainable consumption, social norms play a crucial role in translating these attitudes into actual purchasing behaviour.

Eco-friendly product adoption boils down to the mix of personal attitudes and social norms. Even if people care, social norms are the key to turning attitudes into action. When we know what’s expected, see others doing it, and feel like we’ll fit in (not stand out), we’re far more likely to choose green. Marketers should use social stories—real people, genuine experiences, and social proof—to push eco-friendly choices into the mainstream. Policymakers can help by building programs that make green actions visible and rewarding. Looking ahead, it’d be smart to explore how social media and tech keep reshaping the norms around sustainability. Plus, checking out cross-cultural differences and seeing how behaviors evolve over time could reveal new ways to encourage sustainable habits worldwide.

These observations emphasise how crucial it is to use social influence tactics when advertising sustainable goods. Marketers can reinforce positive social norms by showcasing real consumer experiences and highlighting the increasing popularity of eco-friendly lifestyles. By developing programs that increase the visibility and social recognition of environmentally conscious behaviour, policymakers can also promote sustainable behaviour. Future studies should examine how social media and digital technology affect the dissemination of sustainability-related social norms. Furthermore, analysing cross-cultural variations and the sustainability of ecologically conscious behaviours across time might offer insightful information for encouraging sustainable consumerism globally.

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