

Values and sustainable consumption behaviour: exploring the link in the Indian context

ABSTRACT

This study develops and tests a conceptual model that demonstrates that personal values play an important role in determining individuals' sustainable consumption behaviour. The research investigates the universal values scale, Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) for its applicability in measuring Indian values. The study establishes a need to construct a new values scale by incorporating Indian values. Deriving data using self-assessment questionnaires from 526 respondents in two studies and analysing it using Principal Component Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling, this research reconceptualises Schwartz's PVQ and the 10 motivational value factors and develops an 81-item Holistic values scale (HVS) to measure values.

Values-behaviour relationship was measured by conducting two survey studies. Sustainable consumption behavioural items were divided into three levels (high, medium, low) on the basis of survey responses. Adopting PLS based structural equation modelling, relationship between values and three levels of sustainable consumption behaviours was assessed. Values did impact consumption behaviour but the strength of the relationship for different value dimensions is determined by the context in which the relationship is studied. Over and above the values, identified in literature, that impact pro-environment behaviour, a new set of values were also observed to be instrumental in guiding people's sustainable actions. Next, using means-end approach, an investigation of the relationship between personal values and the decision to buy sustainable product 'Reva' was assessed in order to determine the values that are more likely to influence sustainable consumption behaviour in a real consumption scenario. Semi-qualitative laddering approach was used to collect the data and the results substantiate the results of two survey studies.

An exploration of the moderating role of attitude on values-behaviour relationship generated enough evidence to show that some values directly impact sustainable consumption behaviour, while for some values, values-behaviour relationship is likely to be moderated by attitude formation. This study is the only attempt in values domain that categorize values into groups for which values-behaviour relationship is more likely to be moderated by attitudes. Attitude moderated the influence of the internally oriented subtype of values on sustainable consumption behaviour whereas externally oriented values showed direct impact. The research also investigates the moderating effect of perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) on the attitude-behaviour relationship. PCE was found to have direct impact on all levels of sustainable consumption behaviour, but has a moderating effect only for high sustainable consumption behaviours.

Furthermore, the research investigates the extent to which descriptive characteristics of Indians including demographic, mediagraphic and geographic variables influence their values. The analysis found household income, gender, education level, place of birth, family type at birth as the most important discriminating variables that determine values of different groups of individuals.

Finally, the research explains its significant implications for marketing managers and policy makers intending to target people with sustainable products and services.