

# Understanding Purchase Intention for Green Products: Drivers, Barriers, and Strategic Implications

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**Abstract:** *With rising environmental concerns and sustainable consumption gaining global traction, understanding the purchase intention for green products has become critical for both researchers and marketers. This paper explores the key psychological, social, and economic factors influencing consumer intention to buy environmentally friendly products. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior and Value-Belief-Norm Theory, the study identifies variables such as environmental awareness, perceived consumer effectiveness, price sensitivity, social influence, and trust in green labels as significant predictors. Additionally, it examines the role of green marketing strategies and digital channels in shaping consumer perceptions. Despite growing awareness, a significant gap remains between environmental concern and actual purchasing behavior—a phenomenon referred to as the green attitude-behavior gap. The paper concludes with strategic recommendations for businesses and policymakers to bridge this gap and foster sustainable consumer choices.*

**Keywords:** Green products, purchase intention, environmental awareness, sustainability, green marketing, consumer behavior, attitude-behavior gap

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, sustainability has become a global imperative, influencing public policy, corporate strategies, and consumer behavior. Rising awareness of pressing environmental issues—such as climate change, air and water pollution, plastic waste, and resource depletion—has led many consumers to reevaluate their purchasing habits in favour of more environmentally responsible choices. In response to this shift, the market for green products—defined as goods that are produced, used, and disposed of in a manner that causes minimal harm to the environment—has expanded significantly.

Despite this growing concern and positive consumer attitudes toward environmental protection, a consistent gap remains between intention and actual behavior. Although surveys indicate that a majority of consumers express a willingness to support sustainable brands or purchase eco-friendly products, actual market share for such goods often remains relatively low. This inconsistency—commonly referred to as the green attitude-behavior gap—suggests that there are deeper, more complex factors influencing purchase decisions.

This paper seeks to examine the determinants of consumer purchase intention for green products, as well as the barriers that prevent environmentally motivated consumers from converting their intentions into action. By exploring both psychological and practical drivers (e.g., awareness, social influence, pricing, trust), this study aims to provide marketers, policymakers, and scholars with a holistic understanding of green consumerism and strategies to promote sustainable consumption behavior.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Frameworks

Understanding why consumers choose—or hesitate—to purchase green products requires grounding in behavioral theory. Two well-established models have been particularly useful in explaining pro-environmental behavior:

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) – Ajzen (1991)

The TPB posits that consumer behavior is driven by three core factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of green consumption, this means a consumer is more likely to purchase green products if they:

- 1) Hold a favorable attitude toward sustainability,
- 2) Believe that significant others (friends, family, or society) approve of eco-friendly behavior, and
- 3) Feel confident in their ability to make sustainable choices despite potential barriers (e.g., price, availability).

TPB has been widely applied to predict green product adoption, recycling behavior, and energy conservation.

Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Theory – Stern (2000)

VBN theory takes a more value-centric approach. It suggests that individuals' personal values (such as altruism, biospheric concern, or social justice) influence their environmental beliefs, which in turn activate personal norms that drive behavior. When individuals internalize the moral obligation to protect the environment, they are more likely to engage in eco-friendly behaviors such as buying green products, even if the economic or practical incentives are weak.

These theories offer complementary insights: while TPB emphasizes rational decision-making and perceived control, VBN emphasizes moral responsibility and internalized norms. Together, they provide a robust framework for understanding green purchase intentions.

## 2.2 Key Determinants of Green Purchase Intention

A growing body of empirical research has identified several critical factors that influence consumers' intentions to buy green products:

### Environmental Awareness

Awareness is a foundational driver. Consumers who are well-informed about the adverse effects of pollution, excessive energy consumption, and waste production tend to exhibit higher motivation to purchase sustainable alternatives. Kumar & Ghodeswar (2021) argue that environmental knowledge not only shapes attitudes but also increases the perceived value of green products, making them more appealing even at higher price points. However, awareness alone is not always sufficient—many knowledgeable consumers still do not act on their concerns.

### Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE)

Roberts (1996) introduced the concept of PCE, which refers to the belief that one's individual actions can make a positive impact on the environment. High PCE boosts motivation, as consumers are more likely to feel that their green purchasing decisions are meaningful and worthwhile. Conversely, low PCE may result in consumer apathy—even among those who are environmentally aware.

### Social Influence

Consumers are not isolated decision-makers. Friends, family, social media communities, and broader cultural norms significantly shape behavior. Lee (2008) highlights the role of subjective norms in influencing green consumption, especially among younger consumers who may see eco-friendly behavior as socially desirable. The increasing visibility of sustainability on social platforms has amplified this effect, with many consumers aligning their purchases to project socially responsible identities.

### Price and Quality Perceptions

One of the major barriers to green consumption is the perception that eco-friendly products are more expensive. In reality, many green products do carry a price premium due to higher production costs, certifications, and sustainable sourcing. However, Nguyen et al. (2020) found that consumers are willing to pay more if they perceive the product to offer better quality, ethical value, or health benefits. Therefore, value perception, rather than price alone, determines willingness to buy.

### Trust in Green Labels and Certifications

The proliferation of green claims, some of which are exaggerated or false (a phenomenon known as greenwashing), has led to widespread consumer skepticism. Delmas & Burbano (2011) emphasize that trust in third-party certifications (e.g., USDA Organic, Energy Star, FSC) significantly influences purchase intention. Without credible labels, consumers often struggle to distinguish genuinely

sustainable products from those that merely market themselves as such.

## 3. Conceptual Framework and Methodological Approach

Although this study is conceptual in nature, it draws on a synthesis of theoretical models and prior academic findings to develop an integrative framework for understanding consumer purchase intention toward green products.

### 3.1 Conceptual Framework Overview

The conceptual framework is developed based on two dominant behavioral theories:

- Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991)
- Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Theory (Stern, 2000)

These models inform the hypothesized relationships among constructs including Environmental Concern, Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE), Price Sensitivity, and Trust in Green Labels, which impact Purchase Intention.

### 3.2 Hypothesized Relationships

- 1) Environmental Concern → Purchase Intention (Positive)
- 2) PCE → Purchase Intention (Positive)
- 3) Trust in Green Labels → Purchase Intention (Positive)
- 4) Price Sensitivity → Purchase Intention (Negative)

### 3.3 Rationale for a Conceptual Approach

This paper adopts a conceptual methodology to build a theory-driven framework that can guide future empirical research.

## 4. Conceptual Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Environmental Concern

Consumers with higher environmental awareness are more likely to express intent to purchase green products, though actual behavior may lag due to inconvenience or price.

### 4.2 Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE)

PCE is identified as a critical motivator that links environmental values to behavior through belief in one's personal impact.

### 4.3 Trust in Labels and Certifications

Green trust is essential for reducing risk perception. Greenwashing and false claims can erode this trust.

### 4.4 Price Sensitivity

Price acts as a barrier for many, especially in developing economies. Perceived premium pricing can deter environmentally motivated purchases.

#### 4.5 Inhibiting Factors

Key factors include perceived product unavailability, knowledge gaps about green labels, and brand skepticism.

#### 4.6 Integrated Insight

PCE and trust are conceptually the strongest predictors of green purchase intention. Meanwhile, price and accessibility are significant

fail to translate this into action—a phenomenon known as the attitude-behavior gap. This discrepancy is attributed to:

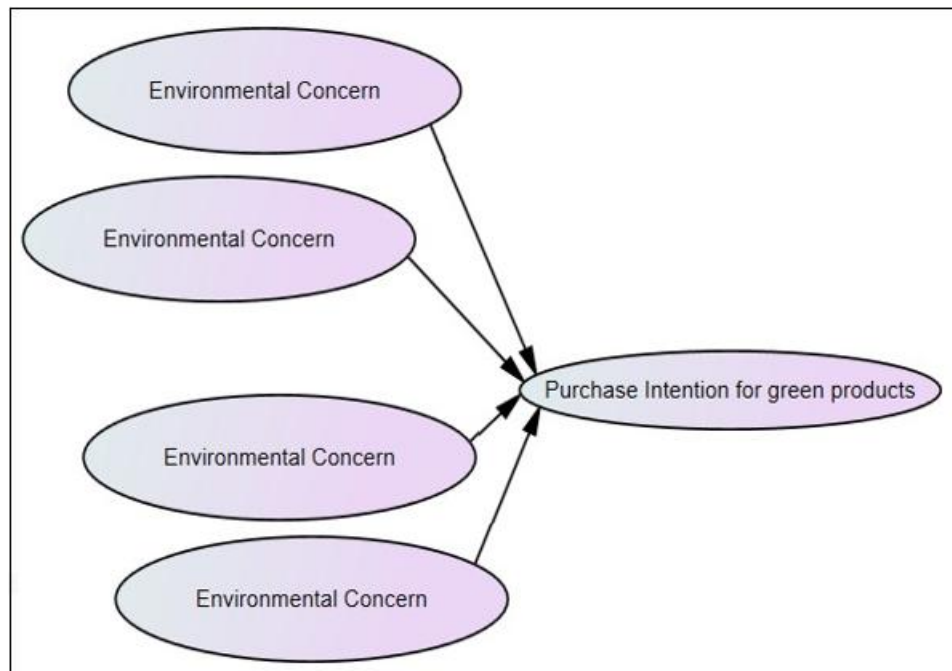
- Habitual purchasing behavior
- Lack of credible information
- Cognitive dissonance between convenience and environmental ideals

Bridging this gap requires integrated communication strategies, clearer labeling, and behavioral nudges.

### 5. The Green Attitude-Behavior Gap

Many consumers express concern about the environment but

### 6. Conceptual Framework Diagram



#### Core Constructs:

##### 1) Environmental Concern

Reflects the consumer's awareness and personal concern for environmental issues.

Consumers with higher concern are more likely to consider the environmental impact of their consumption habits.

Hypothesized Effect: Positive influence on purchase intention.

##### 2) Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE)

The belief that individual behavior can contribute to environmental sustainability.

When consumers believe their actions matter, they are more likely to support eco-friendly brands.

Hypothesized Effect: Strong positive influence on purchase intention.

##### 3) Trust in Green Labels

Trust in the credibility of eco-certifications, organic labels, or sustainability claims. Mitigates skepticism and reinforces consumer confidence in product authenticity.

Hypothesized Effect: Positive influence on purchase intention.

##### 4) Price Sensitivity

Reflects the extent to which price influences a consumer's buying decision.

Green products often carry a price premium, which can deter even eco-conscious consumers. Hypothesized Effect: Negative influence on purchase intention.

### 7. Strategic Implications

#### 7.1 For Marketers

- Eco-label Transparency: Clearly communicate product credentials and third-party certifications.
- Storytelling: Showcase the environmental impact of purchases to build emotional connection.
- Digital Campaigns: Leverage social media, influencers, and interactive tools to engage eco-conscious consumers.
- Pricing Strategies: Offer loyalty rewards or bundles to reduce the perceived price barrier.

#### 7.2 For Policymakers

- Enforce stricter regulations on green claims to counter greenwashing.
- Offer tax incentives or subsidies for companies

producing sustainable goods.

- Promote consumer education through national campaigns.

This conceptual paper offers valuable implications for marketers and policymakers aiming to promote sustainable consumption. Marketers should focus on reinforcing consumers' sense of effectiveness and building trust through transparent, verifiable green labelling. Pricing strategies should aim to reduce the premium gap for green products, possibly through bundling or subsidies. Policymakers can facilitate green purchasing by implementing stronger standards for green certifications, promoting environmental education, and incentivizing businesses that adopt genuine sustainable practices. Future interventions should also address informational barriers and product accessibility.

## 8. Conclusion

The growing urgency of environmental issues has pushed sustainability to the forefront of consumer consciousness. Green products, as a response to this demand, present both an opportunity and a challenge for businesses. This conceptual paper has explored the key psychological and perceptual factors influencing consumer purchase intention for green products, emphasizing the roles of environmental concern, perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), trust in green labels, and price sensitivity.

Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Theory, the proposed framework offers a structured understanding of the drivers and barriers to green consumption. Notably, while environmental concern and PCE serve as internal motivators, external enablers such as credible labelling and affordable pricing play a pivotal role in turning intention into action.

However, the green attitude–behavior gap remains a central issue. Even well-intentioned consumers often struggle to align their values with their purchase behavior due to factors such as high costs, lack of access, and skepticism toward sustainability claims.

To bridge this gap, strategic interventions are needed. Marketers must build trust through transparency, empower consumers with clear messaging, and remove affordability barriers where possible. Policymakers can support this by standardizing eco-labels, regulating misleading claims, and promoting sustainability education.

This paper contributes to the growing discourse on sustainable consumer behavior by offering a clear conceptual roadmap. Future empirical research can validate this model, examine cultural variations, and explore the impact of digital green marketing influencing consumer intent.

Ultimately, understanding and influencing purchase intention for green products is not just a marketing challenge—it is a critical lever for achieving broader sustainability goals.

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