

**Enhancing purchase intentions towards sustainability: The influence of Environmental Attitude, Perceived Consumer effectiveness, health consciousness and social influence**

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**ABSTRACT:**

This study directed towards green consumerism in the Sri Lankan context. The Topic is new and considered as the emerging one in the marketing paradigm. Meanwhile, this study focuses on examining the purchase intention under the concept of green consumerism among young consumers in the Sri Lankan stand point. Four antecedents as environmental attitude, perceived consumer effectiveness, health consciousness and social influence are incorporated in to the proposed model. Rigorous statistical technique like Structural Equation Modelling is utilized to test the main research hypotheses. This study finds that environment attitude, perceived consumer effectiveness, and health consciousness significantly influence the green purchase intention. In contrast, this study observes that social influence does not significantly influence the green purchase intention. In addition, Young consumers in Sri Lankan perspective have a favourable mind set towards green purchase. Therefore, green marketers have potential opportunity to capture the market from young consumers in Sri Lanka. In practice, marketers of the green products may focus on marketing communication by using the themes like “environmental safety, environmental protection, recycling & reusing and healthy life” to induce the young consumers towards green products. To this end, Governmental bodies and policy makers should draft the specific policy to induce the green consumerism in Sri Lankan Stand point. This may be the green signal to the sustainable development which is prosperous.

**KEYWORDS:**

Environmental Attitude, Green Purchase Intention, Health Consciousness, Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, Social Influence

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Environmental problems such as global warming and pollutions are identified and rationalized as the most important global issue and make both individuals and organizations take measures for the preservation of the environment (e.g., Shirsavar & Fashkhamy, 2013). Environmental problems initiated the environmental issues with marketing, in which environmental management and marketing are integrated to focus on green consumerism especially in the hyper competitive environment. Consumers believe that, green consumerism only focuses on promotion and advertising related to eco-friendly products with the message contents like healthy, recycle, reusable, ozone friendly etc. In practice, green consumerism reflects wider scope applied in consumer marketing and industrial marketing (e.g., Chen, 1998; Charter & Polonsky, 1999; Chan, 2001; Peattie & Crane, 2005; Lee, 2008). In line with above facts, products' features with ecofriendly way, eco-labelling, eco-packing, eco-production process, eco-promotion activities, eco-distribution system are systematically incorporated in green marketing and consumerism. Due to that, green consumerism is viewed as a discipline with broad scope in the marketing field (e.g., Akter, 2012). Moreover, Green consumerism is focalized by researchers and practitioners as one of the newly-emerged and extensive concepts in marketing, which encompasses all marketing activities that are done to motivate and strengthen favourable environmental attitudes, purchase intentions and behaviours towards green products (e.g., Chen, 2010).

Interestingly, to advance a country's green revolution, scholars assert that the role of consumers is essential. This assertion is supported by the evidence that environmental degradation has been brought about by the consumption activities (e.g., Chan, 2001). Hence, to better understand the environmental movement of a particular nation, an examination of how its consumers view and feel about ecological issues, and how they behave accordingly, serves as a good starting point. In line with above facts, scholars in the Asian and developing countries document that, absence of green purchase intention and behaviour is the crucial issue to make the green nations through the green consumerism (e.g., Chen, 1998; Charter & Polonsky, 1999; Chan, 2001; Peattie & Crane, 2005; Lee, 2008). In this view, green purchase intention is denoted as the probability and willingness of a person to give preference to the products that are having eco-friendly features over other traditional products in their purchase considerations (e.g., Nik Abdul Rashid, 2009).

Scholars in the pro environmental behaviour document that, studies are necessary to explore the new insights in the developing countries since the studies in this regions seem to be the complicated one. Meantime, cultural values orientations in developing countries are different from those of developed countries (e.g., Diekmann & Franzen, 1999). Moreover, these days, environmental issues are viewed as the pressing problems among many Consumers, Policy makers, Environmentalists, Government and Non-Government bodies. In this aspect, the practice of green marketing and the theme as "Going green" are extending to the Asian region where environmental threats are damaging the welfare of the society and citizens. In the South Asian Region, Sri Lanka started to initiate the environmental issues as the major

concern in the recent decade (e.g., Samarasinghe, 2012). In line with above mentioned statements, this is the time to empirically assess the green purchase intention among young consumers in the Sri Lankan context. The findings or understandings of the study aid to enhance the green marketing culture among young consumers in Sri Lanka. Overall, the researchers in this study anticipate to find out the antecedents of green purchase intention among young consumers in the Sri Lankan Perspective.

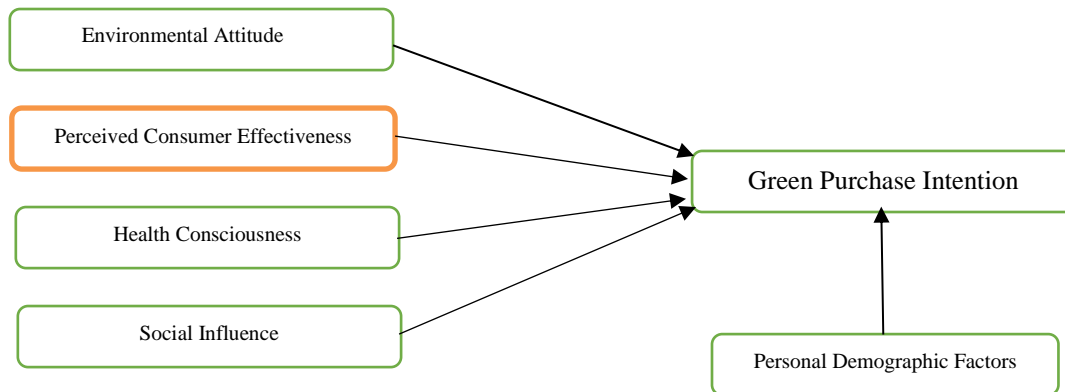
### **Literature Review**

#### **The Proposed Conceptual Model: Application of Theory of Planned Behaviour**

Conceptual Model regarding green purchase intention is constructed to assess the level of intention towards green purchase among young consumers in this study frame. Previous theories, models and approaches on the subject of ecological marketing and green consumerism are used, which enrich the knowledge concerning green consumerism with respect to purchase behavioural intention. In line with above arguments, Theory of Planned Behaviour (e.g., Ajzen, 1991) is used in this study as the main underpinning theory to construct this model to predict the green purchase intention, which in turn will lead to purchase behaviour. Further, most valuable predictor variables or antecedents of green purchase intention as Environmental Attitude (EA), Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE), Health Consciousness (HC) and Social Influence (SI) are identified with previous empirical evidences (e.g., Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Kim & Choi, 2005; Jobber, 2007; Lee, 2008; Pickett-Baker & Ozaki, 2008; Mei et al., 2012; Kaufmann et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2012). To

this end, model constructed for this study is distinctive. It is based on established theory as TPB in line with green consumerism.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Model for this Study**



### **Antecedents of Green Purchase Intention**

#### *Environmental Attitude*

Attitude is a person’s consistently favorable or unfavorable evaluations, feelings and tendencies toward an object or idea (e.g., Kotler, 2009). In line with this, environmental attitude is defined as “Individuals value judgment of environmental protection which taps the individuals’ cognitive assessment of the value of environmental protection” (e.g., Lee, 2008). Environmental attitude is identified as an important predictor of the green purchase intention and behaviour in literatures (e.g., Crosby et al., 1981; Jobber, 2007; Mostafa, 2007; Lee, 2008; Mei et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2012 ; Arttachariya, 2012).

With regard to above empirical facts and evidences, we hypothesize that;

***H<sub>1</sub>: Environmental Attitude positively influences Green Purchase Intention***

### *Perceived Consumer Effectiveness*

Perceived consumer effectiveness is the judgment of an individual about the way and the extent of the environmental effects of his or her behaviour. Further, it differs from person to person, because of the dissimilarity in individuals' personal knowledge and life experience. Some people have thoughts that, their actions hold evolutionary results whereas others may have little confidence in their abilities to make any difference. In line with this, the relationship between perceived consumer effectiveness and green purchase behavioural intention is documented and supported by previous Western and Asian empirical works (e.g., Ellen et al., 1991; Lee & Holden, 1999; Kim & Choi, 2005; Chen, 2007; Lee, 2008 ; Wong et al., 2012). Therefore, Hypothesis is developed as;

***H<sub>2</sub>: Perceived Consumer Effectiveness positively influences Green Purchase Intention***

### *Health Consciousness*

Health Consciousness assesses the readiness to undertake health actions. People who have health consciousness are aware and concerned about their wellness and motivated to improve and maintain their health, and quality of life to prevent illness by engaging in health behaviours (e.g., Newsom et al., 2005). In line with this, consumers may have health consciousness and may be ready to do something good for their health and concern about their own health. In nutshell, a healthy lifestyle is generally characterized as a balanced life in which one makes the decisions towards healthy foods and activities. Furthermore, relationship between health consciousness and green purchase behavioural intention is

documented positively (e.g., Rozin et al., 1999; Magnusson et al., 2001; Sacker et al., 2001; Tarkianen & Sundqvist, 2005; Wong et al., 2012). Thus, we hypothesize that;

***H<sub>3</sub>: Health Consciousness positively influences Green Purchase Intention***

*Social Influence*

Social norm is whether an action should or should not be performed by respondent in a referents' point of view. Referents could be parents, friends, neighbors, relations etc (e.g., Kalafatis et al., 1999). In this context, the information provided by people can have a big impact on consumers. In which, social influence is derived from the concept as subjective norm in the Theory of planned behavior. It denotes to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior. In addition, mass media and social networks also influence the consumer behavior. Several studies have been conducted on the theme that social influence is the significant predictor variable of green behavioral intention. And, the relationship between those variables are proved and documented in the Western and South Asian literature (e.g., De Leon & Fuqua, 1995; Lee, 2008; Baker & Ozaki, 2008; Wong et al., 2012). In line with this, we hypothesize that;

***H<sub>4</sub>: Social Influence positively influences Green Purchase Intention***

### *Personal Demographic Factors*

Past studies conclude that, demographic variables have significant influence on the purchase behaviour towards green issues. Few studies discuss that, gender and profession have the influential power on the green purchase behaviour; especially, female and young people are more environmentally friendly and socially conscious (e.g., Harris et al., 2000; Webster, 1975; Ruiz et al., 2001). Further, income and educational level also influence green purchase behaviour (e.g., Knauer, 1973; Hustad & Pessemier, 1973). Interestingly, Memery et al. (2005) discuss and find that demographic characteristics including race/ethnicity should be considered as an important factor when profiling consumerists and pro-environmental consumers. Panni (2006) précises that, consumers' pro-social or pro-ethical behaviours are heavily influenced by demographic characteristics in terms of age, income, income level, education level and occupation. Thus, we hypothesize that;

***H<sub>5</sub>: There is a significant mean difference in the levels of green purchase intention between male and female customers.***

***H<sub>6</sub>: There is a significant mean difference in the levels of green purchase intention among the religion of customers***

***H<sub>7</sub>: There is a significant mean difference in the levels of green purchase intention among the monthly income of customers***



## Method

### Sample

The sample for this study covered 1325 Management undergraduates in twelve Sri Lankan State Universities (Jayewardenapura, Peradeniya, Colombo, Kelaniya, Ruhuna, Eastern, South Eastern, Rajarata Sabara, Wayamba, Uva Wellasa and Jaffna). Green consumerism in developing countries in the light of preference, usage and dispose of the products and services differs from consumers in developed countries (e.g., Lee, 2008). This is because the cultural, environmental and demographic factors of developing countries vary significantly from those of developed countries. Study is directed towards green consumerism in the Sri Lankan context. Topic is new and considered as the emerging one in the marketing paradigm. Meanwhile, this study focuses to examine the purchase intention under the concept of green consumerism among young consumers as Management undergraduates in the Sri Lankan stand point. Probability sampling method has been used in this study. Under the probability method, Proportionate stratified random sampling was applied to select the respondents from the population. Participants were approached within the University premises. They received information about the purpose of the survey, and they were assured of their anonymity. Paper – based survey were distributed to 2170 respondents. Of these, 1661 respondents responded to the survey and returned them. Of these, 336 surveys had missing data, and so were discarded. Table 01, presents the demographic profiles of the respondents.

**Table 01: Demographic Profiles of the Respondents**

Description	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	412	31.1
Female	913	68.9
Total	1325	100.0
<b>Religion</b>		
Buddhism	1128	85.1
Hindu	57	4.3
Islam	71	5.4
Christianity	69	5.2
Total	1325	100.0
<b>Monthly Income of Family</b>		
Less than Rs. 10 000	215	16.2
Rs. 10 000 - Rs.30 000	636	48.0
Rs. 30 000 - Rs. 50 000	307	23.2
Over 50 000	167	12.6
Total	1325	100.00

### Measures and Instrument Development

A Paper – based survey instrument was designed from previously validated scales, however, these scales were modified to suit the Sri Lankan context, where appropriate. The scale of the antecedents of green purchase intention included 18 items under the four dimensions as environmental attitude, perceived consumer effectiveness, health consciousness and social influence. The scale of environmental attitude included five items adapted from Lee (2008), Wong et al. (2012) and Kumar (2012). Six items measuring perceived consumer effectiveness were adopted from Lee (2008), Kim and Choi (2005) and Chen (2007). The scale of health consciousness included five items adapted from Newsom et al. (2005), Michaelidou and

Hassan (2008) and Suki (2013). Three items measuring social influence were extracted from Lee (2008), Kumar (2012), Aman et al. (2012) and Arttachariya (2012). Green Purchase intention was measured using eight items developed by Follows and Jabber (1999), Kim (2005), Lee (2008) and Rehman and Bin Dost (2013). The items operationalizing all the constructs were measured with five – point Likert type scale ranging from 1 for “Strongly disagree” to 5 for “Strongly agree”.

To ensure content validity, the survey instrument was vetted by five academics with expertise in the discipline of marketing and eco business management. In the final data survey, English version questionnaire was utilized among the respondents of the study as the young consumers, who are following the management degree programs in the medium of instruction as English in the Sri Lankan state universities. Due to that, they have enough academic background in the field of marketing and better level of English language proficiency. In addition to that, Business English course unit was taught parallel with the degree program to ensure the proficiency in English as the medium of instruction. Further, simple English terminology with synonyms aided the respondents to fill the research instruments without having difficulties in terms of subjective aspects. Further, the survey instrument was pretested using one focus group, comprising six Management undergraduates. Based on their feedback, some minor changes were incorporated in to the wording and format of the survey instrument.

## Results and Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis is used in this study to identify a new, smaller set of uncorrelated variables to replace the original set of correlated variables in subsequent multivariate analysis as Structural Equation Modelling.

The conceptual model of this study proposes that Environmental Attitude, Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, Health Consciousness, Social Influence impact on green purchase intention. Hence, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was run for these constructs to evaluate the model fitness and confirm the model for the subsequent analysis as structural equation model. The CFA of the antecedents of green purchase intention had a CMIN/df value ( $X^2$ /Degree of freedom ratio) of 3.062. Value of 3.062 is below the cutoff point. Hence, model is fitted in line with Chi-Square value to degrees of freedom. Also, fit indices, i.e. Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), were above 0.9, with Tucker- Lewis Index (TLI) was close to the value 0.90. Additionally, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR) values were below the cut-off points. These indices suggest a good model approximation to the sample data (e.g., Jebarajakirthy et al., 2014; Jebarajakirthy & Thaichon, 2015).

A structural equation model was used to verify the research model with covariance relationship among antecedents. The results revealed the following fit indices: CMIN/df value ( $X^2$ /Degree of freedom ratio) of 3.06. Value of 3.06 is below the cut-off point. Hence, model is fitted in line with Chi-Square value to degrees of freedom. Also, fit indices, i.e. CFI, GFI and AGFI, were above 0.9, with TLI was close to the value 0.90. Additionally, RMSEA and SRMR

values were below the cut-off points. These indices suggest a good model approximation to the sample data. This is the right time to check the hypotheses. Because, results of the structural model of the green purchase intention with covariance relationship among antecedents revealed that, the structural model is fitted and recognized as valuable model based on advanced statistical measures as CFI, GFI and AGFI in the Structural equation modelling.

### **Hypotheses testing**

The SEM solution reveals standardized regression weights (beta coefficients) and statistical significance (*p*-value) of beta weights for each path relationship, both of which determine acceptance or rejection of a hypothesis. The *P*-value indicates statistical significance at levels of 0.001, 0.01 and 0.05, respectively. The results of hypotheses testing were summarized in table 2.

It was hypothesized that environmental attitude, perceived consumer effectiveness, health consciousness and social influence determine the green purchase intention.

**Table 2. Hypotheses Testing Related to the Determinants of Green Purchase Intentions**

Direct Effect	Standardized Regression Weights	Un Standardized Regression Weights	Significant Level	Conclusion
Environmental Attitude - Green Purchase intention	0.131	0.150	0.019	H <sub>1</sub> -Accepted
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness - Green Purchase intention	0.254	0.198	0.001	H <sub>2</sub> -Accepted
Health Consciousness - Green Purchase intention	0.333	0.360	0.001	H <sub>3</sub> -Accepted
Social Influence - Green Purchase intention	0.032	0.022	0.480	H <sub>4</sub> - Rejected

In summing up the results of hypotheses related to the determinants of green purchase intention, environmental attitude, perceived consumer effectiveness and health consciousness had significant positive influence on green purchase intention. Social influence had insignificant effect on green purchase intention.

**Table 3. Hypotheses Testing related to the Personal Demographic Characteristics Vs Green Purchase Intentions**

Variation	t- Value	f- Value	Sig	Conclusion
Green Purchase Intention Vs Gender	-7.685	-	.000	H <sub>5</sub> - Accepted
Green Purchase Intention Vs Religion	-	0.651	.582	H <sub>6</sub> - Rejected
Green Purchase Intention Vs Monthly Income	-	2.843	.037	H <sub>7</sub> Accepted

Independent samples t-test is utilized to identify the significant mean difference in the levels of green purchase intention between male and female customers. Results revealed that,

there is a significant mean difference in the levels of green purchase intention between male and female customers. Female customers have more willingness to prefer the green products than male. In addition, Independent sample one- way ANOVA test is utilized to find the significant mean difference in the levels of green purchase intention among religion and monthly income of customers. Findings implied that, there is a significant mean difference in the levels of green purchase intention among customers' monthly income. Customers who earn more (50000 RS and above) have more readiness to purchase the eco- friendly products than the customers who earn less (Less than 30000 RS). Further, findings also exposed that there is no significant mean difference in the levels of green purchase intention among the religion of customers. It further implies that preference of green products is in similar level among respondents who follow the various religions (Buddhism, Hindu, Islam and Christianity) in Sri Lankan Context.

### **Discussion**

The results revealed that environmental attitude had significant influence on intention to purchase the eco-friendly products. This implies that, individuals' value judgment of environmental protection (environmental attitude), which taps the individuals' cognitive assessment of the value of the environmental protection. In this way, environmental attitude tap the consumers mind to prefer the green products (e.g., Lee, 2008). Consistent with the findings of Jobber (2007) and Mostafa (2007), study findings also indicated that, environmental attitude had significant influence on green purchase. Further than, based on

Theory of Planned Behaviour, attitude serve as the main antecedent of intention (e.g., Ajzen, 1991). Same as TPB in this study frame, environmental attitude took prominent role to induce the green purchase intention.

Study findings also indicated that, green purchase intention is significantly influenced by perceived consumer effectiveness. It implies that, perceived confidence of an individual in solving the environmental problems with his or her effort exerted tap the consumers mind to prefer the ecofriendly products. In that way, some believe is that, action lead to particular outcomes and thus bring about changes, while others have little confidence in their ability to make a difference. In nutshell, respondents of the study had perceived ability to protect the environment by trying to purchase ecofriendly products.

The study findings revealed that, green purchase intention is significantly influenced by health consciousness. It implies that, respondents in this study are more health consciousness (High Mean Value) and ready to prefer the green products. Consistent with above arguments, generally health consciousness denotes that how health concern is incorporated into daily activities. Further, promptness to undertake health actions is initiated and induced by the health conscious. (e.g., Kraft & Goodell, 1992; Newsom et al., 2005). Previous literature documented that, health concern is considered as the motive to induce the green purchase among consumers who have better level of awareness regarding to the healthy life and its benefits (e.g., Williams & Hammit, 2001 ; Magnusson et al., 2001).

To this end, Study findings revealed that, green purchase intention is not significantly tempted by social influence. Furthermore, respondents in this study had favourable perception on



social influence towards environmental protection theme (Based on Mean Value). Overall, it implies that, interestingly, respondents in this study thought that, they collect the information related to environmental protection and issues from the social context. But, their preference towards ecofriendly products is not induced by those collected information.

### **Implication for Practice**

The findings of this study demonstrate how policy makers and marketers in emerging countries can effectively market green products. Hence these findings can be of use to enhance green products usage in globalized level. The findings revealed that, Young consumers in Sri Lanka have favourable mind-set towards green products. This may be the potential opportunity for domestic and international green marketers. Green marketers can focus on Sri Lanka to enhance the market share among young and energetic consumers. Marketers also can design the suited marketing strategies to attract the target customers towards green products based on the cultural aspects of Sri Lanka. Specially, Marketers can utilize Buzz marketing strategies to induce the young consumers mind towards green products' actual purchase. In this regard, marketing communication in various ways in line with mobile, internet and mass media like television, radio & newspapers is recognized as the base to inform and persuade the young consumers to prefer the green products. Moreover, Marketers strategically use Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) to attract the consumers towards green products. In which, sales promotion, advertisement, personal

selling, direct marketing and publicity & public relation should be integrated systematically to persuade the consumers to prefer the green products.

Environmental attitude, perceived consumer effectiveness and health consciousness influence the green purchase intention. Further, respondents in this study have favorable perception towards environmental attitude. They are of opinion, it is essential to use the natural resources effectively without having harmful effect on the environment and environmental protection (Safety) is meaningful. Therefore, their purchase intention towards green product is influenced by environmental attitude. Perceived consumer effectiveness influence the green purchase intention. In addition to that, respondents have favourable perception on their consumer effectiveness towards green products. Further, they perceive that they could protect the environment by buying products that are friendly to the environment. To this end, health consciousness influences the green purchase intention. These findings remind markets to design the targeting and positioning strategies to tap consumers mind towards green products with the special focus on the green message contents like environmental safety, environmental protection, natural resources, environmental quality, recycling, reusing and healthy life. Furthermore, international and domestic companies producing green products may conduct the awareness program on environmental issues and green consumerism as a part of “Corporate Social Responsibility” Program Island wide per year. Interestingly, green consumerism may also be boosted with the celebratory endorsement with popular stars. In this way, green marketers may use

popular stars in sports and cinema industry in Sri Lanka or international level to make consumers rational to prefer ecofriendly products.

To this end, Governmental bodies and policy makers should draft the specific policy to induce the green consumerism in Sri Lanka Stand point. This may be the green signal to the sustainable development and it's prosperous. In this way, Policy Makers should incorporate the environmental studies in to the primary, secondary and higher education systematically. This may be the base for the young generation and their green standard of living in future perspective. Governmental bodies like Ministry of Environment and Central Environmental Authority may arrange the environmental awareness programs Island Wide continuously to make general public as environmental friendly citizens.

#### **Limitations and Further Research Direction**

Despite the potential contribution of this study, this research also has limitations. The research was conducted in just one country, Sri Lanka; hence the study needs to be replicated amongst young consumers in other regions and countries at the globalized level, which in turn can contribute to a better generalization of findings. Also, the sample of this study comprised young consumers as management undergraduates; hence future work could include the general public, since they also need green purchase. This study investigated the antecedents of green purchase intention among young consumers in the Sri Lanka stand point. In this aspect, four antecedents were incorporated in to the research conceptual model. But, postecedents of green purchase intention were not combined in the model.

Therefore, researchers in the field of green consumerism may incorporate the postcedents of green purchase intention as green purchase behavior, green customer satisfaction, green customer loyalty, green customer retention and green brand equity. Further, marketing stimulus as green promotion and eco labels may be used as mediator or moderator in the proposed model. Furthermore, green perceived value can also be selected as the main research theme. These further research directions may give some cues to the existing literature in the green marketing paradigm.

To this end, a longitudinal study should be taken place to examine whether attitude lead to behaviour changes in future or not. Deep qualitative approach should be applied to ground the theory to bridge the value – action gap. It implies that this study focuses on the prediction of green purchase intention, not realization of these intentions in to green purchase behaviour. Future longitudinal research is recommended to bridge the gap between intention and behaviour; however in defence of this limitation, the connection between behavioural intention and subsequent behaviour has been theoretically established and well supported by extensive empirical research (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, 1985; Chan, 2001; Kim & Choi, 2005; Samarasinghe, 2015). Especially in the relevant literatures of consumer behaviour, the hierarchical model which represents the value – attitude - intention - behaviour structure is considered as the better model to predict the factors influencing on green purchase behaviour (e.g., Kim, 2005 and Lee, 2008). In addition, further research should

be focused to construct a more comprehensive model in which social & psychological, cultural and political & legal factors must be identified to give the new cues for the consumer behaviour literature.

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