

From Social Cues to Sustainable Choices: The Mediating Role of Green Consumption Values in Organic Cosmetics Purchase Intention Among Urban Indian Consumers

Dr. Sneha Amre, Dr. Aditi Saha

ICFAI Business School, Mumbai - 400 076
sneha.amre@ibsindia.org, aditi.saha@ibsindia.org

Abstract

The global increase in health consciousness and ecological awareness has generated immense consumer interest in organic cosmetics; yet it doesn't reflect in higher consumer demands especially in emerging urban economies. This study focuses on how the psychological and social mechanisms shape consumers' intention to purchase organic cosmetics in Mumbai. The study focuses on examining the role of interpersonal influence, perceived knowledge, green consumption values, and perceived behavioural control in driving purchase intention. Theoretically, the study integrates the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) framework, positioning green consumption values as a mediating construct through which social and cognitive antecedents are converted into purchase intent. A single cross-sectional research design was adopted and the data was collected through structured questionnaire from 288 respondents. Measurement scales were adapted from established instruments, and data were analysed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in AMOS. Perceived knowledge construct emerged as a stronger predictor of green consumption values than interpersonal influence. The full mediation was observed in the paths that comes from both interpersonal influence and perceived knowledge towards green consumption values to purchase intention. The findings combine TPB-VBN framework to create more robust model that explains purchase intentions of organic cosmetics in an emerging economy context and emphasises that value internalisation is the crucial driver of purchase intention. The study calls for values-based marketing, consumer education initiatives, and have government or industry support in setting standards and reducing barriers in order to rising organic cosmetics adoption in Indian urban markets.

Keywords: organic cosmetics; green consumption values; purchase intention; sustainability

1. Introduction

The organic cosmetics sector has experienced massive boom within the global beauty industry, fuelled by increasing awareness of chemical toxicity, ecological degradation, and ethical sourcing. Global organic personal care revenues exceeded USD 13 billion in 2023, with double-digit growth projected through 2030 (Grand View Research, 2023). Though consumers are quite aware about the organic cosmetics, several factors act as a barrier which prevents them from buying it. Some of the key barriers witnessed by the consumers are premium pricing, lack of transparency and difficulty in obtaining credible certifications, limited distribution channels and psychological complexity which happens due to consumers priority towards trusted established brand.

Mumbai, as the country's commercial capital, concentrates a population that is educated, digitally literate, and exposed to global lifestyle trends — conditions that make it appropriate

location to study green consumer behaviour. Despite of this fact, the organic cosmetics market in Indian metropolitan cities remains undersized relative to its potential, pointing to factors beyond awareness alone that inhibit conversion of consumers.

Past research studies has identified price sensitivity, eco-labelling, and environmental attitude as key predictor of green purchase intention (Paul et al., 2016; Yadav & Pathak, 2017; Lavuri et al., 2022). However, the integrated framework through which social influence and product knowledge shape values — and how those values translate into intention — remain undertheorized, particularly in the Indian context. This study fills this gap by constructing a framework grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and the Value-Belief-Norm theory (Stern, 2000). Thus, the study tries to answer the following research question:

RQ1- How does interpersonal influence (II) and perceived knowledge (PK) shape consumers' green consumption values (GCV), which, subsequently drive their purchase intentions (PI) towards organic cosmetic products?

RQ2-How does consumers' perceived behavioural control (PBC) directly influence their purchase intention to purchase organic beauty products?

For the analysis, the study examines how the effects of interpersonal influence and perceived knowledge shape green consumption values, which, along with perceived behavioural control trigger organic cosmetic purchase intention. Additionally, the mediating role of green consumption values is also evaluated. By applying the TPB-VBN combined framework to organic cosmetics in an emerging urban market, the study helps in giving more actionable insights to marketers and policymakers seeking to accelerate sustainable product adoption.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) states that behavioural intention is determined by perceived behavioural control, attitude, and subjective norms. When TPB is applied in green purchasing, subjective norms capture peer and social influence while PBC reflects beliefs about the ease of performing the behaviour. The Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory (Stern, 2000) complements the TPB by tracing back how personal values activate pro-environmental beliefs and norm-guided behaviour. Green consumption values — the degree to which environmental responsibility guides purchase choices — constitute the value-activating mechanism that bridges antecedent inputs with behavioural intention. Integrating these two theories helps frame the conceptual framework, which helps in understanding how the social and cognitive inputs first reshape value orientations, which then drive intentions.

2.2 Interpersonal Influence and Green Consumption Values

Interpersonal influence encompasses the extent to which attitudes and behaviours are shaped by reference groups, family, and peers, operating through both informational and normative channels (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). Social networks exert considerable normative pressure on consumption choices (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Pristl et al.,2021) in a socialist country like India. Prior studies conducted by different authors confirms that interpersonal influence significantly shapes the green consumption values and attitudes (Khare, 2015; Trivedi et al., 2018; Mansoor et al.,2025). When peers within a consumer's social network emphasise the importance of eco-conscious behaviour, the consumer is more likely to internalise green values and integrate them into self-identity.

H1: *Interpersonal influence has a significant effect on green consumption values.*

2.3 Perceived Knowledge and Green Consumption Values

Perceived knowledge helps in understanding the individual's subjective assessment of their own understanding of a product domain (Brucks, 1985). In the context of the organic cosmetics components, it includes familiarity with ingredient sourcing, certification standards, and ecological benefits. Aertsens et al. (2011) found subjective knowledge to be a stronger influencing construct for organic food values, while Chen (2010) demonstrated knowledge-to-values pathways for eco-products. In the Indian context, Yadav and Pathak (2017) confirm that product knowledge is among the stronger predictors of green purchase intention. When consumers feel informed about why organic cosmetics matter, they are more likely to internalise corresponding green values.

H2: *Perceived knowledge has a significant effect on green consumption values.*

2.4 Green Consumption Values and Purchase Intention

Green consumption values represent a significant commitment while aligning the purchasing decisions with environmental and ecological responsibility (Haws et al., 2014). Within the VBN framework, these values serve as proximal influencing predictors of environmentally significant behaviour. Empirically, green values have consistently predicted purchase intention across organic food (Teng et al., 2011), personal care products (Kim & Chung, 2011) and eco-apparel. Jaiswal and Kant (2018) demonstrated that value orientation significantly mediated the relationship between ecological awareness and purchase intention from the Indian context.

H3: *Green consumption values have a significant effect on purchase intention for organic cosmetics.*

2.5 Perceived Behavioural Control and Purchase Intention

The practical feasibility of executing a behaviour — including perceptions of affordability, product availability, and one's ability to evaluate product authenticity (Ajzen, 1991) relates to Perceived behavioural control (PBC). For organic cosmetics, where premium pricing and limited retail presence may create genuine access barriers, PBC is a meaningful predictor of intent. Robust direct effects of PBC on green purchase intention in Indian contexts has been studied in Paul et al. (2016) and Yadav and Pathak (2016). Chen and Tung (2014) further demonstrate that perceived resource sufficiency moderates the values-to-intention pathway.

H4: *Perceived behavioural control has a significant effect on purchase intention for organic cosmetics.*

3. Research Methodology

A single cross-sectional descriptive research design was employed. Mumbai was considered as ideal place to collect data due to its digital literacy, higher disposable income and higher adoption level towards new fashion trends. A structured questionnaire using pre-validated constructs and items was administered through Google Forms.

Mixed sampling method of convenience and snowball sampling was adopted for the said study. The data was collected through social media channels, educational institutes and workplace. After screening and data cleaning, 288 responses were declared fit for the analysis (92.9% retention). This sample satisfies Hair et al.'s (2019) criterion of ten responses per construct for SEM, and as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) it also exceeds the minimum of 200 observations for stable CFA estimation.

The questionnaire comprised sociodemographic items and five Likert-scale constructs (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree): Interpersonal Influence (11 items; Bearden & Etzel, 1982), Perceived Knowledge (5 items; Brucks, 1985; Aertsens et al., 2011), Green Consumption Values (4 items; Haws et al., 2014), Perceived Behavioural Control (3 items; Ajzen, 1991; Paul et al., 2016), and Purchase Intention (3 items; Dodds et al., 1991). Data analysis proceeded through reliability testing (Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability), CFA for construct validity (AVE, Fornell-Larcker criterion), and SEM for hypothesis testing. Mediation was evaluated using bias-corrected bootstrapping (5,000 resamples; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Analyses were conducted in SPSS 26 and AMOS 24.

4. Results

4.1 Sample Profile

Females constituted 59.7% of respondents (n = 172); males, 40.3% (n = 116). The dominant age cohort was 20.1–35 years (56.6%, n = 163), consistent with the study's focus on digitally engaged urban millennials. Graduates comprised 44.1% (n = 127), postgraduates 38.2% (n = 110), and professional degree holders 17.7% (n = 51). Monthly cosmetics expenditure was most concentrated in the Rs. 1,001–3,000 bracket (51.4%, n = 148), indicating moderate-to-substantial personal care spending.

Table 1: Consumer Characteristics

Variables	Categories	N	%
Gender of the respondent	Male	116	40.30%
	Female	172	59.70%
Age (in years) of the respondent	Less than 20 years old	77	26.70%
	20.1 - 35 years old	163	56.60%
	35.1 - 50 years old	32	11.10%
	more than 50 years old	16	5.60%
Education level of the respondent	Graduate	127	44.10%
	Post graduate	110	38.20%
	Professional Degree	51	17.70%
Average amount spent on cosmetics (in thousands-k)	Less than Rs. 1000	64	22.20%
	Rs. 1001 - Rs. 3000	148	51.40%
	Rs. 3001 - Rs. 5000	47	16.30%
	More than Rs. 5000	29	10.10%
Total		288	100%

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of the Constructs

The descriptive statistic of the study is shown in Table 2. It includes standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis for the 5 constructs formulated for the study. PI recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.10, SD = 0.82), suggesting that respondents, on average, expressed a relatively strong disposition toward purchasing organic cosmetics. Green Consumption Values followed closely (M = 4.02, SD = 0.73), indicating that the sampled Mumbai consumers hold fairly internalised ecological orientations in their purchasing outlook. Perceived Behavioural Control also yielded a mean above the scale midpoint (M = 3.91, SD = 0.73), reflecting a moderate-to-strong sense of self-efficacy and structural access in relation to organic cosmetics purchase.

In contrast, PK (M = 3.21, SD = 0.86) and II (M = 3.13, SD = 0.72) registered comparatively moderate means, sitting near the neutral midpoint of the five-point scale. This suggests that while respondents do not consider themselves poorly informed, self-assessed knowledge about organic cosmetics remains far from saturated — a finding that carries meaningful implications for consumer education strategies. The relatively modest interpersonal influence score is noteworthy given India's collectivist social orientation, and may reflect the still-emerging nature of peer norms around organic cosmetics specifically, even among urban, educated consumers.

The 5 constructs show skewness values within the ± 1.5 range and kurtosis values within ± 3 , satisfying the benchmarks for approximate univariate normality recommended by Hair et al. (2019). The mild negative skew observed across constructs, most pronounced for Purchase Intention (-0.847) and Green Consumption Values (-0.661) indicates a modest ceiling tendency.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Interpersonal Influence (II)	0.721	-0.319	0.161
Perceived Knowledge (PK)	0.864	-0.283	-0.245
Green Consumption Values (GCV)	0.733	-0.661	0.086
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	0.731	-0.686	0.816
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.816	-0.847	0.540

Note: Skewness within ± 1.5 and Kurtosis within ± 3 indicate acceptable normality (Hair et al., 2019). Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

4.3 Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.799 to 0.836, meeting Nunnally's (1978) threshold of 0.70. Composite reliability (CR) ranged from 0.803 to 0.853, and AVE values from 0.518 to 0.665, satisfying the convergent validity benchmark of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was confirmed via the Fornell-Larcker criterion: the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded its highest inter-construct correlation. Harman's Single Factor Test found no single factor explaining more than 49.5% of variance, indicating common method bias is not a significant concern (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Table 3: Reliability, Validity and Discriminant Validity

Construct	α	CR	AVE	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$	II	PK	GCV	PBC	% Variance
Interpersonal	0.815	0.814	0.588	0.593	—				35.16%

Influence (II)									
Perceived Knowledge (PK)	0.799	0.853	0.665	0.748	0.265	—			46.10%
Green Consumption Values (GCV)	0.836	0.803	0.518	0.744	0.222	0.351	—		45.43%
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	0.835	0.842	0.520	0.871	0.185	0.303	0.441	—	49.50%
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.813	0.814	0.593	0.854	0.225	0.377	0.650	0.511	48.32%

Note: \sqrt{AVE} on diagonal; off-diagonal = inter-construct correlations. Discriminant validity confirmed where $\sqrt{AVE} >$ all correlations in row/column.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

Using SEM analysis, it was observed that all the four hypotheses were supported (Table 4). Green consumption values (H3: $\beta = 0.587$, $t = 11.131$, $p < 0.001$) emerged as the most powerful predictor of purchase intention. Perceived behavioural control (H4: $\beta = 0.294$, $p < 0.001$) was the second strongest predictor. Among antecedents to green consumption values, perceived knowledge (H2: $\beta = 0.267$, $p < 0.001$) was more influential than interpersonal influence (H1: $\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.016$). The explanatory power of the model was robust: II and PK jointly explained 14.1% of variance in GCV ($R^2 = 0.141$); GCV and PBC jointly explained 48.5% of variance in PI ($R^2 = 0.485$).

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	S.E.	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	II \rightarrow GCV	0.141	0.058	2.429	0.016	Supported
H2	PK \rightarrow GCV	0.267	0.048	5.520	< 0.001	Supported
H3	GCV \rightarrow PI	0.587	0.053	11.131	< 0.001	Supported
H4	PBC \rightarrow PI	0.294	0.050	5.869	< 0.001	Supported

R^2 (GCV) = 0.141; R^2 (PI) = 0.485; significance threshold: $p < 0.05$, $t > 1.96$.

The results of the mediation analysis reveal that GCV fully mediates both antecedent-to-PI pathways (Table 5). The indirect effect of II on PI via GCV was 0.159 (95% CI [0.059, 0.275]); of PK on PI via GCV, 0.197 (95% CI [0.123, 0.281]). In both cases, confidence intervals exclude zero, confirming statistical significance. Direct effects of II and PK on PI were non-significant, establishing full mediation. This indicates that social influence and product knowledge do not directly produce purchase intent; they must first reshape consumers' green value orientations, which then drive behaviour.

Table 5: Mediation Results

Path	Total	Direct	Indirect	Mediation
II \rightarrow GCV \rightarrow PI	0.256	0.096 (ns)	0.159*	Full
PK \rightarrow GCV \rightarrow PI	0.357	0.160 (ns)	0.197*	Full

* *CI excluding zero = significant indirect effect; ns = not significant.*

5. Discussion

The findings indicate that green consumption values (GCV) have a central position in the model and strongly determine the purchase intention ($\beta = 0.587$, $p < 0.001$). This observation shows that consumers with a high level of environmental responsibility and sustainable consumption tend to form intentions to buy organic cosmetics. The finding is consistent with an earlier study by Kim and Chung (2011) and Jaiswal and Kant (2018) that found value orientation to be among the best predictors of organic product adoption. In the environment of organic cosmetics, the results are that when ecological responsibility is made a significant value of a person instead of an abstract notion, it becomes a potent driving force of purchase behaviour.

It is also found during the study that both perceived knowledge and interpersonal influence have a significant impact on the formation of green consumption values, and the influence of each of them is various. The values of green consumption are more influenced by perceived knowledge ($\beta = 0.267$) than interpersonal influence ($\beta = 0.141$). This can be interpreted as the fact that the knowledge of consumers on environmental advantages, natural ingredients, and sustainability factor of organic cosmetics is more instrumental in informing their environmental value orientation than the social pressure by peers or reference groups. These results go hand in hand with Aertsens et al. (2011), who stressed the importance of consumer knowledge in the development of pro-environmental attitudes and values. The findings also show that cognitive awareness and information can be even more significant among urban and educated consumers than social conformity in developing green consumption values.

One of the main study findings is the intermediating nature of values of green consumption between antecedent factors and purchase intention. The results indicate that interpersonal influence and perceived knowledge are not directly related to purchase intention unless they enhance first the environmental values of consumers. This underscores the fact that sustainability as part of the system of values should be internalised by the consumers before they can engage in the purchase of organic cosmetic products.

Besides the drivers of value, the perceived behavioural control (PBC) also has a major impact on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.294$, $p = 0.001$). This shows that such practical factors as affordability of the products, their availability, and confidence in certifying bodies have an impact on the consumer buying organic cosmetics. Even the consumers who have a high level of environmental perception can be unwilling to buy organic products when they have the perception of high costs or locality. The model accounts 48.5% of purchase intention difference ($R^2 = 0.485$), which indicates that internal value orientations and external market conditions are both involved in influencing the adoption of organic cosmetics. Combined, these results prove that sustainable cosmetic consumption is based not solely on what consumers are likely to appreciate but on whether they feel capable of following through on those values.

6. Conclusion

The paper aimed to understand why certain urban Indian consumers form a strong intention to buy organic cosmetics and others do not buy organic cosmetics despite being subjected to the same level of social influence and information pertaining to the product. The results suggest that the most distinguishing element is on the values of green consumption that the

consumers have, which serves as the focal point of converting external forces into behavioural intentions. Green consumption values are rather a psychological gateway in which interpersonal influence and perceived knowledge needs to be filtered before influencing purchase intention. The findings indicate that interpersonal influence and perceived knowledge are two factors that develop green consumption values, whereby, the influence of perceived knowledge is more pronounced. It implies that the awareness of consumers on environmental benefits, sustainable ingredients and the overall effect of an organic cosmetic has a higher influence on environmental value orientation than social pressure only. Notably, the results substantiate a fact that both interpersonal influence and perceived knowledge do not directly translate into purchase intention unless these two aspects are initially strengthening internal value systems of consumers. In this respect, consumer decision-making process within the organic cosmetics market would be essentially value-based, as the consumer responsibility would have to enter the belief commitment of the consumer before it would be converted into purchase intentions. Another independent role that the study puts forward is the perceived behavioural control that plays a significant role in purchase intention.

The green consumption values along with perceived control of behaviour describe a significant percentage of purchase intention with a higher focus on the fact that sustainable consumption behaviour is defined by both internal incentive and external market circumstances. It shows that the internalisation of environmental values with favourable market conditions is the main factor contributing to the idea of sustainable cosmetic consumption based not only on the awareness or social influence but on the latter. In terms of management, the results imply that the marketers have to concentrate on the value-based communication strategies, emphasizing on communicating to the consumers the environmental and health advantages of using organic Cosmetics along with relating the advantages to the identity and lifestyles of the consumers. The information offered about the products or their social pressure might not work sufficiently without any impact that will enhance the environmental values of consumers. Meanwhile, policymakers and industry players ought to strive to minimize structural impediments through enhancing product access, having clear certification procedures and price competition.

Future studies may also be integrated into this model by the implementation of longitudinal studies to detect the variation in consumer values and behaviour across time, the use of multi-city or cross-regional samples to enhance generalizability, and the introduction of other moderating variables, including brand trust, price sensitivity, and familiarity with eco-labels. Such studies would offer more information on the changing aspects of sustainable consumption in the new markets.

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