



Determinants of Consumer Engagement on Green Product Buying in Food Restaurants in Masvingo Urban, Zimbabwe: The Mediating Role of Culture.

Dennis Mashoko

Great Zimbabwe University

Corresponding Author: dmashoko@gzu.ac.zw



ABSTRACT

The study evaluates the effects that consumer engagement has on green product buying in food restaurants in Masvingo Urban, Zimbabwe. A descriptive research design was used and quantitative data were obtained using a questionnaire survey with restaurant employees and customers. The empirical results showed that cognitive engagement, individual environmental literacy, emotional engagement, behavioural engagement, interpersonal influence, and the moderating effect of culture enhance green product buying. Culture plays a partial mediation role in the relationship between customer engagement and green product buying. The study concludes that consumer engagement for green product buying should focus on cognitive, emotional, behavioural, interpersonal influence variables and the moderating effect of culture to achieve green product buying. The study recommends that the government, through policy-makers in the food and beverages industry, should educate and promote customer engagement behaviours as guided by recommendations of this study.

Key Words: Consumer engagement; Food restaurants; Green Product Buying; Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

Restaurant food waste is a new and fascinating field of study (Mancuso, Angelo, Umberto & Paolo, 2021). Area of consumer engagement has received a lot of attention from many studies (Civilai, Daniel & Lester, 2021), for instance, a study on consumer engagement in online brand communities (Yang & Sun, 2020), a study on the role of social media corporate responsibility and

environmental management (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020), a study on the determinants of consumer engagement in sustainable consumption (Piligrimiene, Hubert & Aiste, 2020), and a study on social media brand communities (Civilai et al., 2021). However, though there is a wide range of study streams in areas of social media community engagement, there is less established extant literature in the restaurant food sector particularly focusing on the drivers of



consumer engagement (cognitive, emotional, individual literacy, and interpersonal) mediated by culture (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). As a result, restaurant food waste becomes bad for the environment and for people, and, thus, calls for an urgent solution to the problem (Yang & Sun, 2020). Food restaurants need to practise sustainable environmental business and consumption (Principato, Pratesi & Secondi, 2018), and studies like this one will help and enlighten policy-makers in their efforts to encourage the market purchase of green products (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2019). In the many consuming market places and restaurant sub-sectors, it is critical to develop sensible strategies for sustainable consumption (Papargyropoulou, Wright, Lozano, Steinberger, Padfield & Ujang, 2016). Additionally, this research could improve the techniques for achieving green product buying and the factors of customer engagement. Restaurant food waste is a problem that policy-makers must address if they hope to attain environmentally sustainable consumption (Stenmarck, Jensen, Quested & Moates, 2016). The majority of developed nations have developed markets that are more environmentally conscious (Christ & Burritt, 2017), but emerging nations have immature markets that are less responsive to sustainable consumption, which is why this study is necessary (Civilai et al., 2021).

In Zimbabwe, in particular Masvingo urban, restaurant food outlets have been on the rise in the recent past, such as Chicken Slice, Chicken Inn, Bakers Inn under the Simbisa brands, operating under the franchise business, KFC, Madeira

Restaurant, Chivhanga Restaurant, Maworese Restaurant, and Madzimai Restaurant. Reports on irresponsible food waste and littering of wrappings of food items have been a cause of concern for the Masvingo city fathers and Environmental Management Authority (EMA). In addition to litter bins around the town, women's environmental clubs have been formed through the Environmental Safety Department of Masvingo City Council, responsible for working towards greening the ancient city and picking litter around areas surrounding locations. Despite all these efforts to ensure that there is respect for environmentally-friendly practices, unsustainable food waste and a high increase in littering have indicated that there is the existence of inconsistent moral principles and immature markets that are less responsive to sustainable consumption (Rambe & Ndofirepi, 2016).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question is: To what extent does consumer engagement influence green product buying? The main research question was explored through the following key sub-research questions:

1. To what extent does cognitive engagement influence green product buying?
2. To what extent does individual literacy influence green product buying?
3. To what extent does emotional engagement influence green product buying?
4. To what extent does behavioural engagement influence green product buying?

5. To what extent does interpersonal influence affect green product buying?

OBJECTIVES

The main research objective was to examine the extent to which consumer engagement influence green product buying. The primary objective was explored through the following key secondary objectives:

1. To establish the effect of cognitive engagement on green product buying.
2. To assess the impact of individual literacy on green product buying.
3. To determine the effect of emotional engagement on green product buying.
4. To examine the impact of behavioural engagement and green product buying.
5. To evaluate effect of interpersonal influences on green product buying.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The study the employed Elaboration Likelihood Model (LEM) and Relationship Marketing (RM) theory focusing on cognitive processing of information and green information processing (Prashant & Utkarsh, 2023). The study variables are theoretically rooted on the LEM model as it emphasises and supports key variables under study. The multi-dimensionality of the model facilitates understanding of the effect of the variables in green product buying. Relationship Marketing theory provides a clear lens to understand consumer engagement. The RM theory supports

consumer engagement variables under study as it centres on consumer interactive experiences. The interactive experiences, as they are created with other actors, are interpreted as process of engaging.

Cognitive Engagement on Green Product Buying

Products that are environmentally-friendly and cognitively-engaged are more likely to be seen as being environmentally-responsible (Civilai et al., 2021). According to the Regulatory Engagement theory (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2019), sustained attention is what defines engagement, and diverting attention from the object diminishes engagement. Accordingly, sustained attention as a measure of a customer's concentration on the surroundings and attentiveness is crucial to fostering consumer engagement (Civilai et al., 2021). The first hypothesis is as follows:

H1 Cognitive engagement significantly correlates with green product buying.

Individual environmental literacy positively influence green product buying.

Individual knowledge on the benefits of greening the environment enhances citizen's participation in ethical buying and consumption patterns (Chih-Cheng et al., 2018). The level of awareness in greening the environment correlates with green product buying (Piligrimiene et al., 2020). Citizens are positively influenced by objective knowledge on environmental issues, whilst subjective knowledge does not have any influence on the consumer attitude towards greening the environment, hence individual

literacy to enhance objective knowledge should be emphasised to ensure that consumers are positively influenced to embrace green environmental practices (Civilai et al., 2021). Moreover, consumer concerns on the environment contributes to affective engagement and green product buying (Mancuso et al, 2021). The study's second hypothesis is as follows:

H2 Individual environmental literacy positively influences green product buying.

Emotional engagement and green product buying

Mancuso et al. (2021) found a favourable correlation between emotional and sustainable consumption. There is a strong correlation between emotional involvement and sustainable consumption (Civilai et al., 2021). Furthermore, extant literature has acknowledged that emotion influences consumer attitudes and behaviour in a positive way and can inspire and convince people (Yang & Sun-Choung, 2020; Aguilar-Luzon et al., 2020). Emotional engagement has been shown to have a direct impact on content production; as such, it is essential for consumers of green products (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2019). The study's third hypothesis is as follows:

H3 Emotional engagement positively influence green product buying

Behavioural consumer engagement and green product buying

Customer participation positively impacts innovation speed and technical innovation, which, in turn, helps the

company's sales performance and competitive advantage (Aguilar-Luzon et al., 2020). Numerous studies show that customers participate in co-creation to improve the production of goods or services that better meet their need for environmentally-friendly products and to express their discontent with current offerings (Yang & Sun-Choung, 2020). According to other studies, customers express their ideas and product-related skills in order to acquire recognition and improve their reputation (Mancuso et al., 2021). The fourth hypothesis is as follows:

H4 Behavioural engagement positively influence green product buying.

Interpersonal influence/Peer pressure and green purchase intentions

It is well established that interpersonal conversations have an effect on customer behaviour (Mancuso et al., 2021). Customers see people in their networks as informed advisors rather than as swayed representatives of a specific company or brand (Aguilar-Luzon et al., 2020). People look to social networks for behavioural clues, which raises the possibility that online interpersonal influence will have an impact on consumers' decisions to buy (Yang & Sun-Choung, 2020). According to Mancuso et al. (2021), peer pressure refers to the capacity of a buddy or subordinate to persuade someone to take an action. Expectations within groups are frequently different. Peers, friends, subordinates, and co-workers are crucial referent groups when implementing a new system (Inkpen & Bailey, 2020). The study's fifth hypothesis is as follows:

H5: Interpersonal influence is positively influence green product buying.

Moderating effect of culture on green product buying

Managers should be aware of national cultural values because culture has a big impact on consumers' perceptions of green initiatives and ethical attitudes (Mancuso et al., 2021). The study's culture variables for moderating the determinants of consumer involvement are masculinity and individualism vs collectivism.

Individualism-collectivism and green product buying

The individualism-collectivism spectrum describes how much a nation's population values group dynamics above individualism (Aljarah, 2020). Accordingly, consumers in collectivist societies have more charitable and socially conscious purchasing behaviours (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020).

According to earlier studies, customers who value collectivism are more inclined to support a company's sustainability initiatives (Aljarah, 2020). In order to increase the intention to purchase green products, collectivism is essential. Numerous studies have argued that consumer culture has a favourable influence on the use of environmentally-friendly items (Yang & Sun-Choung, 2020). According to earlier studies, customers who value collectivism are more inclined to support a company's sustainability initiatives (Aljarah, 2020). In order to increase the intention to purchase green products, collectivism is essential. Numerous studies have argued that consumer

culture has a favourable influence on the use of environmentally friendly items (Zhang et al., 2019). The sixth hypothesis is as follows:

H6. Individualism-collectivism correlate with green product buying.

Femininity-masculinity and green product buying

Women's civilizations are typically more focused on consensus, while masculine cultures are typically more focused on competitiveness (Zhang et al., 2019). People from feminine cultures will buy sustainable products. Generally speaking, research indicates that males buy fewer environmentally friendly products than women (Aljarah, 2020). In an effort to better understand how gender affects environmentally-conscious consumption, Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) established that gender variations exist in men's and women's green behaviour. According to Civilai et al. (2021), women exhibit a higher degree of purchase intention for environmentally-friendly products since they are raised to be loving and empathetic from an early age. Thus, the seventh hypothesis is as follows:

H7: Femininity-masculinity correlates with green product buying.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework outlines the research model which shows the linkages connecting variables of consumer engagement and green product buying. The pillars cognitive engagement, individual literacy, emotional engagement, behavioural engagement and interpersonal influence are all features of consumer engagement and are

Determinants of Consumer Engagement on Green Product Buying in Food Restaurants: The Mediating Role of Culture

connected to green product buying, which is as follows:

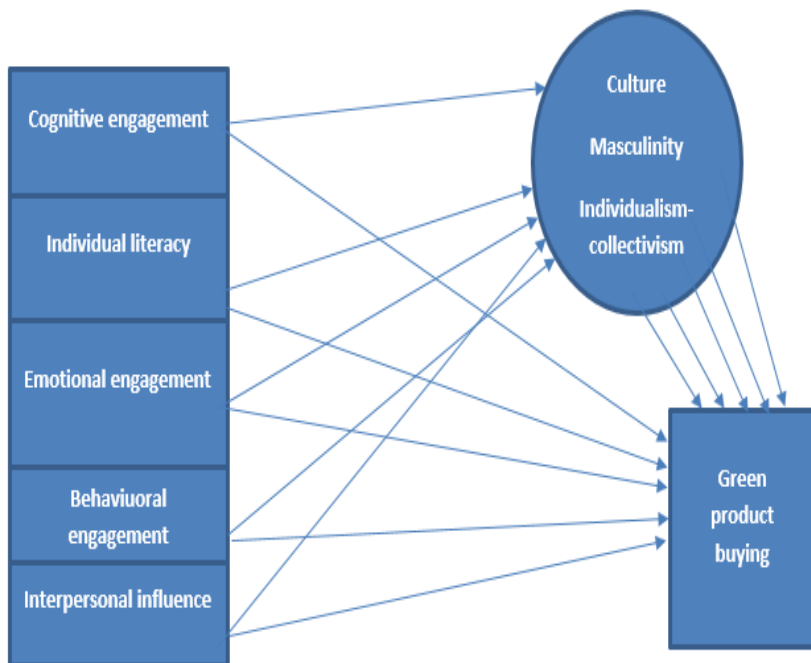


Figure 1: Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research was used for primary data collecting. The survey questionnaire was created using a variety of themes that surfaced from the literature regarding the factors that influence successful customer involvement and the purchase of environmentally friendly products. Likert and closed-ended questions were used to create questionnaires for data collecting. Two sections made up the questionnaire. The population of study was approximately 1000, consisting of employees, management, and key patroning clients from 10 food outlets in Masvingo Urban. Five variables are examined in the first section: cognitive engagement, individual literacy, emotional engagement, behavioural engagement, interpersonal

influence, and the moderating effect of culture. 100 questionnaires were given to 100 patroning clients and 50 staff members, including branch managers and employees of 10 food restaurants in Masvingo Urban. Collecting data using questionnaires was done using two approaches: on-line questionnaires and hard copies questionnaires from the selected 10 food outlets in Masvingo Urban. Documentary analysis information was collected from journals and published sources from the internet. The researcher used purposive and convenient sampling techniques, which are simple and easy for the research to generate data. Since there was need to select managers, employees and key patroning clients, the researcher wanted to make sure key respondents could be conducted. The sample size was 100 respondents (10% of the study population) from the 10 restaurant food outlets of the study population. To analyse data, the study used SPSS version 21. Different tests such as Anova tests, regression, correlation, hypothesis testing, confidence interval estimation procedures, and other statistical measures were done. The data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed and interpreted to obtain the desired results. Some of the results were obtained using numerical information suitable to meet the demand of the research under study. The scale dimension of the study was found using the factor analysis on the scales. The results obtained on the scale were subjected to a reliability analysis to find their suitability in the research. The research also managed to test hypotheses and the results were interpreted.

FINDINGS

Regression Analysis

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.901 ²	.826	.794	.411

a. Predictors: (constant), consumer engagement

b. Dependent Variable: green product buying

The influence of the independent variable (consumer engagement) on the dependent variable (purchasing of green products) is displayed in Table 1 above. Regressing sustainable consumption against brand equity revealed an adjusted R-Square of .794 and R-Square of .826, which indicates the impact of the independent variable. As seen from the descriptive data above, consumer engagement has a positive link with green product buying (positive model R = 0.901). The modified R-Square value of 0.794 indicates that 79% of the phenomenon under study is explained by the independent variables under consumer engagement behavioural, cognitive and individual literacy, while the remaining 21% is explained by emotional and interpersonal influence that make up the consumer engagement as relating to green product buying for food restaurants. With a high

predictive capability of 90%, the model demonstrated a high goodness of fit for the research at hand, as indicated by the adjusted R-Square value of 0.794. The results are consistent with those by Civilai et al. (2021), who discovered a positive and linear association between consumer engagement and sustainable consumption.

Anova Tests

Table 2: Anova Test

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.884	7	1.106	7.84	.000
	Residual	8.045	57	.127		
	Total	12.929	64			

a. Dependent variable: Green product buying

b. Predictors: (Constant), consumer engagement

Table 2 above shows a positive association between consumer engagement and green product buying is demonstrated by the positive model R-figure of .4.884. According to Table 2 above, the p-values of .000 signifies a positive correlation. Therefore, the hypothesis that "Consumer engagement has a positive and significant relationship on green product buying" is accepted. The aforementioned results align with those by

Aljarah (2020), who demonstrated that consumer interaction has a beneficial influence on future purchasing behaviour. They came to the conclusion that behavioural, emotional, individual environmental literacy, interpersonal and cognitive engagement reinforces the actual practices of sustainable behaviour. Inkpen and Bailey (2020) concluded that there was a direct correlation between consumer involvement and sustainable consumption, which was supported by a rise in the market for green products.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that there is a positive correlation on consumer engagement variables. Cognitive, individual literacy, emotional, behavioural and interpersonal factor mediated by culture significantly influence green product buying in food restaurants sector, with positive model ($R=0.901$). The results are in sync with those of Pilgrim et al.'s study (2020), which found that consumer participation had a beneficial effect on the purchase of green products and future purchasing behaviour. The correlation value of .463 indicates a strong positive link between cognitive engagement and green product buying. The correlation of .488 indicates a strong positive link between individual literacy and green product buying. The correlation value of .444 indicates a strong positive link between interpersonal and green product buying. The correlation of .446 indicates a strong positive link between emotional and green product buying. Moreover, the correlation .445 indicates a strong positive link between behavioural engagement and green product

buying. This relationship is statistically significant because the P-value is less than .05, or $<.001$. In light of the aforementioned, it is agreed that "Cognitive has a significant relationship on green product buying." Purchase intention is significantly and favorably impacted by emotional engagement, as evidenced by the correlation value of 0.562 and the statistical significance of the P-value of .003, both of which are less than .05. This finding is in sync with Mancuso et al. (2021), who established that there is a strong correlation between emotional involvement and green product buying. Of all the consumer engagement components, behavioural engagement had the lowest correlation value (.433). The finding also affirms that there is a substantial positive correlation between buying green products with P-value is .000 and less than .05. As a result, the theory that "Behavioural has a significant relationship with sustainable consumption" is supported. This finding resonates with Yang and Sun-Choung's (2020) finding that customers participate in co-creation to improve the production of goods or services that better meet their need for environmentally-friendly products and to express their discontent with current offerings. It is, therefore, understood that there is a considerable relationship between emotional customer engagement and green product buying. Whilst mainstream literature focuses on consumer engagement in social media brand communities as a behaviour, with an emphasis on the ways in which consumers interact with brand-related elements through their behaviour in developed countries (Young & Sun, 2020). The current study demonstrates the

significant influence of consumer engagement and green product buying (with positive model $R=0.901$). Hence, this current study has managed to test consumer engagement in a unique context, with additional seven variables and mediating variable culture, which has significantly contributed to the literature and policy guidelines as far as green environmental management strategies are concerned.

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of the study was to ascertain the influence of consumer engagement on green product buying in the restaurant food sector. The study came to the conclusion that the real sustainable behaviour practices are strengthened by cognitive, individual literacy, emotional behavioural engagement, interpersonal impact, and the mediating effect of culture (masculinity, individualism, and collectivism). This agrees with Mancuso et al. (2021), who concluded that there is a direct correlation between consumer engagement and the purchase of green items, which is supported by a rise in the market for eco-friendly goods. This study reveals variables that may be significant in encouraging customer participation in the purchase of green products. This is an attempt to incorporate the concept of customer participation into the context of purchasing environmentally-friendly products, since research on marketing suggests that engagement can be a useful and tactical instrument in the promotion of certain sustainable consumer behaviours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study reveals that consumer engagement is critical for achieving sustainable consumer behaviour. The study recommends integration of the consumer engagement construct into the context of green product purchase mediated by cultural factors. Similarly, the government, through the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), in collaboration with Masvingo City Council's Environmental Health Department, should educate and promote cognitive, individual literacy, emotional, behavioural and interpersonal engagement attributes. In the same vein, consumer participation in green environmental activities should be enhanced. Moreover, the study recommends that more environmental social clubs should be created, working on citizens (consumer engagement) guided by study variables and to see how best these variables can be turned into positive attitude development towards greening restaurants business in Masvingo Urban. The current study also recommends the extension of study to more restaurants in the country to cater for contextual differences of areas and policies that may be confined to each area. Moreover, since the current study was based on restaurants in Masvingo Urban, resulting in the study being a case study of restaurants based in Masvingo Urban, to improve generalization of study results, a longitudinal cross-sectional study could be carried out to cater for different sectors.

REFERENCES

- Aguilar-Luzon, M.C., Carmona, B., Calvo-Salguero, A. & Castillo, V.P.A. (2020). Values, Environmental Beliefs, and Connection with Nature as Predictive

- Factors of the Pro-Environmental Vote in Spain: *Front. Psychol*, 11, 1043-1046
- Aljarah, A. (2020). The nexus between corporate social responsibility and target-based customer citizenship behaviour. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 28(12), 2044-2063.
- Chih-Cheng, C., Chien-Wen, C. & Yi-Chun, T. (2018). Exploring the Consumer Behaviour of Intention to Purchase Green Products in Belt and Road Countries: An Empirical Analysis. *Sustainability*, 10, 854-858.
- Civilai, L., Daniel, R. & Lester, W.J. (2021). Promoting Customer Engagement Behaviour for Green Brands. *Sustainability*, 13, 8404-8406.
- Christ, K.L. & Burritt, R. (2017). Material flow cost accounting for food waste in the restaurant industry. *Br. Food J.* 119 (3), 600-612.
- Filimonau, V., Delysia, A. & De Coteau (2019). Food waste management in hospitality operations: A critical review. *Tourism Management*, 71, 234–2.
- Inkpen, R. & Baily, B. (2020). Environmental beliefs and their role in environmental behaviours of undergraduate students, 10, 57-67.
- Mancuso, I, Angelo, N., Umberto, P. & Paolo, R. (2021). Understanding the Purchasing Behaviour of Consumers in Response to Sustainable Marketing Practices: An Empirical Analysis in the Food Domain, 13(11), 6169-6170.
- Nguyen, Y.T.H. & Nguyen, H.V. (2020). An alternative view of the millennial green product purchase: the roles of online product review and self-image congruence. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 33(1), 231-249.
- Papargyropoulou, E., Wright, N., Lozano, R., Steinberger, J., Padfield, R. & Ujang, Z. (2016). Conceptual framework for the study of food waste generation and prevention in the hospitality sector. *Waste Management*, 49, 326-328.
- Prashant, K. & Utkarsh, B. (2023). Effects of in-store information quality and store credibility on consumer engagement in green retailing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 71, 2-3.
- Piligrimiene, Z.E., Hubert, K.E. & Aiste, D. (2020). Internal and External Determinants of Consumer Engagement in Sustainable Consumption, 12(4), 1349-13450.
- Principato, L., Pratesi, C. & Secondi, L. (2018). Towards zero waste: an exploratory study on restaurant managers, 74, 130-137.
- Rambe, P. & Ndofirepi, P. (2016). Influence of Small Business Ethics on Buying Decisions of Customers: A case of Indigenous Owned Fast-Food Outlets in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Economics and Behavioural Studies*, 5, 169-183.
- Stenmarck, Å., Jensen, C., Quedsted, T. & Moates, G. (2016). Estimates of

European Food Waste Levels. European Commission, Stockholm.

Yang, J.J. & Sun-Choung, A.H.N. (2020). The Effects of Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Behavioural Intention on Perceived Values in Traditional Marketplaces 18(10), 25-38.

Zhang, L., Fan, Y., Zhang, W. & Zhang, S. (2019). Extending the Theory of Planned Behaviour to Explain the Effects of Cognitive Factors across Different Kinds of Green Products. *Sustainability*, 11(15), 4222-4222.