

Conscious cleaning products: The influence of green marketing on consumer buying behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Society's interest in environmental issues and sustainability has made green marketing a priority for organisations globally. Consumer behaviour has a significant influence on climate change, and alterations in consumer behaviour have the potential to reduce the carbon footprint of consumption by up to 25%. A substantial portion of this can directly be attributed to consumers selecting products with a lower carbon footprint. Traditionally, household cleaning products have had a detrimental effect on the environment but they have more recently made extensive use of green marketing strategies. This study aimed to investigate the influence that the green marketing of cleaning products has on the buying behaviour of consumers. Consumer insights were gathered using an interpretivist, qualitative, exploratory approach with a focus group methodology to determine how their perception of green marketing and its influence on their buying behaviour might be affected. Findings revealed that although participants have a positive attitude towards green marketing and green cleaning products, their buying behaviour is influenced by factors such as price, quality, convenience, and health. Factors such as eco-labelling, social media, and product attributes are important factors that influence their decision-making process. Also noted was the lack of awareness of green cleaning products and their limited availability. This study aids in understanding the effectiveness of green marketing and highlights the need for greater awareness in the promotion of the benefits and availability of green cleaning products. This study provides a deeper understanding of green marketing's influence on consumer behaviour and can be used to guide in the development of future practices for the promotion of eco-friendly products. Consequently, it is recommended that more research studies be conducted on the effectiveness of green marketing, so that we can better understand whether these campaigns are successful, and whether they actually influence consumer purchasing decisions. Furthermore, there is a need to understand the consumer decision making process with different products, as factors that influence buying behaviour might differ within different products.

Keywords: Sustainability, green marketing, cleaning products, consumer behaviour, eco-friendly products



1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change and sustainable development are two of the world's most pressing environmental issues (United Nations, 2022). Consumer behaviour is a significant driver in promoting climate change (Matasci, Gauch, Böni & Wäger, 2021; Thøgersen, 2021). Thøgersen (2021) found that modifications in consumer behaviour could reduce the European Union (EU)'s carbon footprint by 25%. These modifications include changes in consumption patterns and reducing consumption. More specifically, 17% and 19% of that reduction could be attributed to consumers substituting goods with a lower carbon footprint during production and use (Thøgersen, 2021; Moran et al., 2020). Society's interest in environmental issues and sustainability has made green marketing a crucial concern for organisations around the world (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2017). As concerns about environmental sustainability continue to rise, organisations worldwide are increasingly adopting green marketing strategies to cater to the growing demand for eco-friendly products (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2017). Amongst the range of generally available eco-friendly products, household cleaning products provide an interesting focus, given its wide use and recent growth in providing more eco-friendly alternatives (Patak, Branska & Pecinova, 2021). Household cleaning products are popular, universally used products, that can have a negative impact on the environment (Franklin-Cheung, 2019). It is argued that almost everyone uses cleaning products, so this sector caters to a large part of the consumer population. Within this context, the cleaning product industry has witnessed a notable shift towards promoting environmentally friendly alternatives that minimise harm to the planet and human health (Franklin-Cheung, 2019; Thøgersen, 2021). Green marketing strategies are implemented to create awareness about green sustainable products to try and change consumer buying behaviour and avoid the degradation of the ecological environment (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). The importance of the effort to change consumer buying behaviour lies in the fact that consumer behaviour plays a significant role in the contribution to ecological degradation and changing consumer behaviour to a greener outlook would have a significant influence on the world's carbon footprint (Thøgersen, 2021; Moran et al., 2020). Furthermore, the product selection is of relevance since one of the authors has a concept product in the field and would like to better understand how to develop future marketing strategies for these products.

As discussed above, consumer consumption is a high contributor to environmental degradation and therefore highlights the importance of studying consumers' perceptions of green marketing and how it influences their buying behaviour. The topic of green marketing has been well studied as a result of organisations attempting to understand, cater to and capitalise on consumer environmental concerns (Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020; Al-Dubai & Develi, 2022; Ali, 2021; Bailey, Mishra & Tihamiyu, 2018; Gowda & Anand, 2020; Haq, Adnan & Ali, 2021; Hayat, Nadeem & Jan, 2019; Hesse, Rünz, 2022; Mtimka & Chinomona, 2019; Musgrove, Choi & Chris Cox, 2018; Rahlin, Nor Azma & Gualin, 2023; Rajanikanth & Banerjee, 2021; Sharma, 2021). However, green marketing and sustainability remain a relatively new phenomena in the context of the business environment (Priti, 2021), highlighting the need for continued research on the use of green marketing in various contexts and with different products. Furthermore, gaining perspectives from consumers on the use of green marketing strategies is key to fully understanding the effectiveness of green marketing initiatives.

Green marketing strategies, if used effectively, have the potential to influence consumer decision-making (Sharma, 2021; Al-Dubai & Develi, 2022; Haq, Adnan & Ali, 2021; Rajanikanth & Banerjee, 2021). However, it is relevant to gain an understanding of whether these green marketing strategies employed actually influence consumer behaviour. Obtaining insights from consumers regarding their perceptions of green marketing and its influence on their buying behaviour is crucial in understanding the effectiveness of green marketing strategies, but it creates greater awareness around how to ultimately progress towards the creation of more green consumers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN MARKETING

The conceptual origin of green marketing stems from the triple bottom line accounting framework (Elkington, 2018). The introduction of the triple bottom line framework placed the focus on financial, social and environmental reporting (De George, 2012), and framed the goals of a business to not just be on one bottom line (profit) but other areas as

well (people and planet) (Elkington, 2018). The focus on other aspects over and above profit provided for green initiatives within a business (such as green marketing). The triple bottom line framework and notions regarding green marketing have been widely adopted by companies and organisations around the world. Interest in the field of green marketing began in the early 1980s (Elkington, Burke & Hailes, 2017), with an increased focus on the importance of sustainability and social responsibility in business practices and marketing strategies (Elkington & Hailes, 1988). Elkington's work on green marketing has been influential in shaping the way that organisations approach sustainability and social responsibility. During the 1980s, organisations started to consider not only their profit but also their social responsibility and the impact their business activities have on the environment (Elkington, Burke & Hailes, 2017). This shift away from a pure profit focus was driven by consumer demand for products that were better for the consumer and the environment, and was found that the business sector's subsequent adoption of green marketing practices was more market-driven than self-imposed (Veiga Neto, Pereira da Silva, de Alencar Caldas, da Silva Barreto & El-Aouar, 2020). Therefore, organisations that adopted green marketing practices did so in order to appeal to consumers rather than it being the right thing to do for environmental preservation.

According to Elkington and Hailes (1988), green marketing involves the use of marketing strategies that promote sustainable products and practices while also communicating the environmental and social benefits of these products to consumers. Green marketing could help companies differentiate themselves, create a competitive advantage and build strong relationships with environmentally conscious consumers (Elkington & Hailes 1988; Al-Dubai & Develi, 2022). The revolution of sustainability and green marketing has been and still is a major opportunity for organisations around the world to attain their marketing objectives and create a competitive advantage (Sharma, 2021; Al-Dubai & Develi, 2022).

The link between marketing and environmental protection has been phrased in multiple ways, including environmental marketing, ecological marketing, green marketing, sustainability marketing, environmental protection strategy and environmental-friendly marketing (Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020; Sharma, 2021; Al-Dubai & Develi, 2022). Green marketing entails highlighting all sustainability (or green) actions linked to the production processes, packaging, advertising, corporate citizenship and more (Ali, 2021; Al-Dubai & Develi, 2022; Rajanikanth & Banerjee, 2021). The purpose of green marketing is to facilitate the actions of the consumer by providing them with the necessary information to make their buying decision (Hayat, Nadeem & Jan, 2019). Green marketing plays a vital role in the success of both the green products themselves and the organisation as a whole (Hayat, Nadeem & Jan, 2019). Rajanikanth and Banerjee (2021) found that green marketing strategies were able to influence consumer buying behaviour when making purchasing decisions about detergent products. Haq, Adnan and Ali (2021) also concluded that green marketing strategies have a significant effect in creating increased environmental awareness and are successful in influencing buying behaviour. Increased environmental awareness, through the use of green marketing approaches such as eco-labelling, green advertising and green branding, educated the consumers which in turn demonstrated an influence on their buying behaviour.

While green marketing can be successful in influencing buying behaviour, Veiga Neto et al (2020) state that it is crucial to understand the relationship between a consumer's values and buying. Values are understood as stable convictions about what is desirable; the beliefs that people hold about what is important, right and wrong (Rossouw & van Vuuren, 2018). Values of consumers influence the consumption of sustainability-related products, and it is therefore vital to understand these values in order to design more effective marketing campaigns (Veiga Neto et al., 2020). Exploring the relationship between consumer values and buying will enable green marketing approaches to be more tailored to the consumer, and therefore more focused and successful in influencing buying behaviour. This focus on understanding consumer values highlights the need for research that gains an in-depth understanding of consumers' perceptions and experiences of green marketing.

The study's context is in Cape Town, South Africa. Cape Town is a city currently undergoing rapid expansion (CSIR, 2019). With rapid expansion comes greater consumption and a higher carbon footprint from consumption, thus illustrating the importance of using alternatives that do not or contribute less to the consumer's carbon footprint (CSIR, 2019; Thøgersen, 2021). As discussed earlier, consumer consumption is a high contributor to environmental degradation and highlights the importance of studying consumers perceptions of green marketing and how it influences their buying behaviour in specifically Cape Town, as it is becoming increasingly important that greener consumerism is

achieved. Furthermore, the context of Cape Town, South Africa, is relevant to explore to ascertain whether consumer perception aligns with that of studies done in different cultural contexts (Rajanikanth & Banerjee, 2021; Haq, Adnan & Ali 2021; Veiga Neto et al., 2020).

2.2 ECO-LABELLING AS A PREDOMINANT GREEN MARKETING STRATEGY

Different green marketing strategies can influence consumer perceptions and attitudes towards products and, in turn, affect their buying behaviour. Some of these marketing strategies used include eco-labelling, green advertising, green branding, eco-packaging, corporate social responsibility and social media campaigns (Sharma, 2021; Veiga Neto et al, 2020; Haq, Adnan & Ali, 2021; Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019; Ali, 2021; Rahlin & Gualin, 2023; Gowda & Anand, 2020). Sharma (2021) and Veiga Neto et al (2020) found eco-labelling to be the most used strategy in green marketing. However, it is only effective when the consumer has the knowledge and green awareness to understand the importance of such a label. Haq, Adnan and Ali (2021) support this view in that even though eco-labelling is valuable to use as a marketing tool in the green marketing strategy, the design of the green label is vital for its ability to influence buying intention. Haq, Adnan and Ali (2021) pointed out that the label needs to be simple and easily identifiable for the consumer, and Kahraman and Kazançoğlu (2019) found that the use of green colours and floral-like images is essential to be able to convey a green natural appeal. It is important to note that if the product does not also highlight its green attributes, consumers become sceptical, resulting in a negative influence on buying behaviour (Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019).

However, Ali (2021) found eco-labelling to be insignificant as other green marketing strategies such as green advertising and green branding were proven to be more successful in influencing buying behaviour. Rahlin and Gualin (2023) found that green advertising in the form of promotions and infomercials was the most effective strategy, as it enabled the consumer to engage with the green product. The use of promotions helped the consumer understand more about the green product and the benefits that come from consuming it. This view is supported by Hayat, Nadeem and Jan (2019) who found a direct positive relationship between green promotion and green buying behaviour. Rajanikanth and Banerjee (2021) stated that 87% of their sample knew about green detergent products due to promotional work and advertising, showing its effectiveness in creating green awareness. However, the respondents were unaware of which brands actually adopted green practices, thus showing the lack of green branding among organisations in the market. The use of advertising was also found to be vital as it educated consumers on the organisation's CSR (Gowda & Anand, 2020).

Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Abubakari (2020) did not pinpoint a specific strategy but rather highlighted the importance of marketing strategies targeting green value as well as the youth segment in a study done in Ghana. It was found that green value, referring to consumers' overall evaluation of products with regards to their environmental and sustainable advantages, is an important factor in purchasing decisions. Similarly, Nguyen, Nguyen and Nguyen (2019) did not highlight a specific strategy but rather stated that for a marketing strategy to be relevant and effective, it must be developed with the core purpose of educating young consumers on the utilitarian benefits experienced from green consumption. This further highlights the need for this study to gain insights from consumers regarding the use and effectiveness of green marketing. To develop an effective green marketing strategy with the green marketing tools available, marketers need to understand the different factors influencing consumer buying behaviour regarding green products.

2.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF GREEN PRODUCTS

Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviour posits that an individual's behaviour is influenced by their *attitudes* (positive or negative evaluation of behaviour), *subjective norms* (social pressure to behave in a particular way) and *perceived behavioural control* (the individual's perceived ability to perform the behaviour). The theory of planned behaviour provides insight into the deciding factors that direct the buying behaviour of consumers (Ajzen, 1991; Sharma, 2021). Various studies (Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020; Nguyen, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019) that aimed to better understand the influence of green marketing, have adopted the theory to uncover and identify the buying behaviour of consumers, which is therefore a relevant theoretical framework for this study.

The more positive the individual's *attitude* is towards a behaviour, the greater the chance that the individual will carry out the behaviour (Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020). A positive attitude is normally developed as a result of the expected positive outcomes of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020). *Subjective norms* refer to the individual's perceived social pressure on whether it is socially acceptable (or not) to carry out (or not carry out) a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020). Normally, it is only people who are important to the individual that can have an influence on their buying behaviour, as they seek to identify and fit in with the consensus among their peers or society (Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020; Nguyen, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019). *Perceived behavioural control* refers to how easy or difficult it is for an individual to behave in a specific manner (Ajzen, 1991; Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020).

There are both internal and external factors that influence consumers' buying behaviour regarding green products (Gowda & Anand, 2020). Internal factors come from within the consumer, such as their perception, awareness, knowledge, values, involvement, and attitude. External factors influence the consumer externally, such as green marketing efforts, social norms and product attributes. Rahlin and Gualin (2023) found attitude to be the most influential factor affecting consumer buying behaviour for green products. Self-expression and utilitarian benefits were the factors that elevated the consumer's attitude towards green cleaning brands. Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Abubakari (2020) also confirm that green knowledge and attitudes are positively associated with green purchasing behaviour. Witek (2020) and Sharma (2021) further state that there is a strong conditional link between attitudes and real behaviour towards green products. When other factors such as direct product experience, knowledge of sustainable benefits, green trust, quality and price are met, the consumer's attitude does indeed positively influence green buying behaviour.

However, environmental attitude alone does not influence purchasing intention (Sharma & Foropon, 2019). Arli, Tan, Tjiptono, and Yang (2018) also found that attitude does not correlate to green buying behaviour unless the consumer has the knowledge, time and ability to adopt a green outlook. Sharma (2021) highlighted that social attributes are essential in affecting the attitude of consumers towards a change in their buying behaviour. Rahlin and Gualin (2023) found that consumers are influenced by the self-expressive benefits gained from showing their peers that they consume green products. This was also evident in the study conducted by Khare (2020); however, social opinion improved the evaluation of green apparel attributes by the consumer (Nguyen, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019; Arli et al, 2018). Arli et al (2018) also found that social opinion was so powerful that it even superseded the consumers perceived green readiness and highlighted the importance of the consumer's perceived readiness to be green. This indicates that when consumers have the time, knowledge, and ability to be green, they are. Arli et al (2018) confirm the planned behavioural control variable discussed above, as it implies that when consumers perceive themselves as 'able' to consume green products, they do.

Price is a factor that enables and disables the consumption of green products, as green products are generally perceived to hold a premium price, therefore, the price strategy selected for the product is important (Sharma, 2021; Haq, Adnan & Ali, 2021; Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Abubakari, 2020). In some cases, price is not a barrier, as consumers are willing to pay a higher price for the green product when it is justified (Fenton, 2019). This depends on factors such as environmental concern, product quality, efficacy, design and satisfaction with previous consumption (Hesse & Rünz, 2022; Hayat, Nadeem, & Jan, 2019; Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019; Sharma & Foropon, 2019; Sharma, 2021). Hayat, Nadeem, and Jan (2019) as well as Kahraman and Kazançoğlu (2019) suggest that environmental concern is one of the main drivers of consumers' willingness to pay a premium for green cleaning products. Consumers who have low environmental concerns make conditional cost-effective purchases, but consumers who have high environmental concerns make unconditional purchases where the price is not considered (Sharma & Foropon, 2019). Sharma (2021) furthermore found that where price is a barrier to the consumption of green products, it does not apply to quality products or in markets where the experience with the product was positive.

Product efficacy has also been found to influence consumer buying behaviour and willingness to pay for green products (Hesse & Rünz, 2022). Ultimately, the 'green price' of a product is high as it considers the triple bottom line theory in a way that ensures efficiency in production and a lower carbon footprint (Hayat, Nadeem, & Jan, 2019). If an organisation demonstrates transparently how the product aids the environment and educates the consumer on this, it helps to justify the premium price (Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019; Rajanikanth & Banerjee, 2021). There is a direct

link between environmental knowledge and purchase intention (Sharma & Foropon, 2019; Witek, 2020). Sharma (2021) found that education and knowledge have had a significantly positive influence on consumer buying behaviour regarding green products. The general lack of education and knowledge of the consumer regarding the benefits of green consumption has a negative influence on consumer buying behaviour as the consumer cannot buy something they are not aware of (Venuite et al., 2023). At the same time, consumers will not try to change their consumption if they do not understand how it influences the environment. Arli et al (2018) argue that consumers need to better understand the influence their buying behaviour could have on reducing environmental degradation. This would help the consumer adopt a *ready-to-be-green* outlook, which was the influential factor in the study on translating intention into actual buying behaviour. The *ready-to-be-green* outlook was the factor that attitude and perceived behavioural control depended on being effective or ineffective at influencing buying behaviour (Arli et al., 2018).

However, knowledge of the environment and the extent to which the person is environmentally aware is a vital influencing factor. Ali (2021) found that it acted as a negative influencer because organisations did not always follow through with their green claims and the consumers did not have the knowledge to understand this. This speaks volumes to the implementation of green trust and transparency and the banning of greenwashing, as the use of greenwashing by certain organisations can potentially affect the ability of all truly green organisations to effectively influence consumer buying behaviour for the better (Sharma, 2021; Hayat, Nadeem, & Jan, 2019). Due to the many organisations that are trying to exploit the revolution of green consumption, consumers have become sensitive to negative information about greenwashing (Sharma, 2021). This highlights the importance of trust and transparency as factors influencing buying behaviour. Trust can be earned through transparency and specificity in marketing efforts, but at the same time it can also be broken due to vague and unsubstantiated claims (Musgrove, Choi & Chris Cox 2018; Rajanikanth & Banerjee (2021). Fenton (2018) and Kahraman and Kazançoğlu (2019) found transparency and trust to be influential, while Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Abubakari (2020) found green value to be more important.

Even though existing literature has highlighted certain green attributes as factors that can influence buying behaviour, Haq, Adnan and Ali (2021) found that if the packaging quality and quality of the product did not meet or supersede that of traditional products, buying behaviour would not change as consumers would not buy products solely because of their green attributes. Witek (2020) also found consumers to be influenced by the health and safety attributes of green products. However, the study noted that consumers will only buy green products when they meet the standards of traditional products concerning quality, performance, availability and convenience (Witek, 2020). Overall, the literature consulted suggests that green marketing can positively influence consumer behaviour when the correct marketing tools and strategies are implemented, taking into consideration the factors that influence consumer buying behaviour, with a focus on green consumption and meeting consumer needs.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to discover if green marketing of cleaning products has any influence on consumer buying behaviour, as well as what factors influence consumer attitudes and perceptions toward environmentally sustainable products. As discussed above, consumers' buying behaviour and the switching to more environmentally friendly products play a large role in climate change and the deterioration of our environment (Thøgersen, 2021). Additionally, the study aimed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing green marketing strategies from the consumer's point of view. It is important to understand consumer perception of green marketing messages and its influence on consumer buying behaviour, as it could provide organisations with an enhanced understanding of what they need to change or continue with to help consumers adopt a greener consumption pattern. Therefore, the research question that guided the study was: *How do Cape Town consumers perceive the influence that the green marketing of cleaning products has on their buying behaviour?*

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative, interpretive, exploratory design was utilised to gain a deeper understanding of consumer perceptions (Maree, 2019; Maxwell, 2013), as the study was intended to examine green marketing efforts related to cleaning products through the consumer's perspective, and determine whether or not such efforts had any influence on their

purchase decisions. Interpretivism wishes to gain subjective understanding, and acknowledges that social context, conventions, norms and standards of people and communities are important to consider in understanding human behaviour (and decision making) (Maree, 2019). Therefore, interpretivism was an appropriate approach, since the study wished to investigate and explore the consumer perspective and experiences (Maree, 2019) to gain an understanding of the consumer values, perspectives and reasoning, and not just identify buying behaviour. A case study approach, utilising a focus group methodology was suitable to explore in-depth understanding and insights from participants (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021; Mack, Woodson, Macqueen, Guest & Namey, 2005) In a focus group, a discussion is moderated by the researcher with typically between five and twelve participants (Maree, 2019). A focus group is a qualitative data collection approach that allows for the collection of in-depth data about a group's perceptions, attitudes and experiences on a defined topic. Given the interpretivist, qualitative nature of the study, purposive, non-probability sampling was used (Maree, 2019). All participants needed to be consumers of household cleaning products. Potential participants that fit the criteria were contacted via social media platforms and invited to partake in the study, and the purpose of the study was explained to all potential participants. Participation was completely voluntary. The researcher continuously engaged with all participants to find a suitable time, date and location that would accommodate the schedules of all participants. Participants were e-mailed informed consent forms to complete and sign, confirming they understood their participation in the study and were freely willing to partake in it as a participant. Although eight participants initially agreed to take part in the focus group, three participants withdrew (due to personal commitments) before the study took place, and only five were interviewed in the focus group. Although the purposively selected sample size was small, the qualitative nature of the study allowed participants to freely share their views, perceptions and experiences and enabled in-depth data to be collected (Maree, 2019; Maxwell, 2013). Although data saturation in the study could not fully be reached with one focus group alone, the group reached data saturation as the focus group discussion dissolved naturally after 62 minutes and 43 seconds. Given the aim of the study, which is to understand consumer perceptions and experiences regarding the green marketing of cleaning products and the influence it has on their buying behaviour, it was relevant to collect in-depth data to enable a true understanding of consumer reasoning and perceptions of the influence green marketing has on their buying behaviour.

During the focus group session, a funnel structure was used whereby the broad semi-structured questions were posed early on, gaining an understanding of the participants' general perspectives, which allowed the participants to ease into the process where they actively discussed and debated issues (Maree, 2019). As the discussion continued it became slightly more structured, ensuring that the pertinent topics of the study were covered (Maree, 2019; du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021; Mack et al., 2005). The participants were also provided with a few images of some green marketing practices of various cleaning products to help invoke discussion. The focus group session was audio and video recorded to aid with the transcription and eventual analysis of the data. Participants all gave informed consent to be recorded in the focus group. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process were used to analyse the data. The process was adopted in the following manner (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2013; Vignali & Hallier, 2015): The raw data was transcribed via Otter.ai. To refine and reduce the data, the focus group transcription was re-read multiple times whilst making edits to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. There was a continuous engagement with the transcribed recording, the original voice recording and the video recordings from the focus group session to ensure the accuracy of the reduced transcriptions and to enhance the trustworthiness, specifically the dependability of the study. This continuous engagement led the to an understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences, which was then further reduced into themes. The main ideas and themes (Maxwell, 2013) (factors that influence buying behaviour) were identified by analysing the literature as well as studying the transcribed data. This process was done multiple times and checked by a second researcher, to ensure the accuracy of the themes, and enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. It was also necessary to conduct member checking in which the themes and results of the study were shared with the participants in order to increase credibility and ensure that their perceptions were still accurately represented (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021; Amankwaa, 2016; Gunawan, 2015). Transferability indicates the usefulness of the results in an alternative context. As the application of the results ultimately lies with the consumer of the research (Amankwaa, 2016), the researcher provided them with large amounts of detail and information through the thick description to ensure that the findings are transferable. Journaling in the form of field notes and reflection on the research process regarding the location of the study, its participants and the

used data collection methods was used as a technique to capture the thick description and present the information for future researchers (Amankwaa, 2016; Gunawan, 2015). The confirmability was ensured through reflexivity and the development of an audit trail, resulting in a full in-depth description of the research process (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021; Amankwaa, 2016). Furthermore, two researchers were involved to ensure the process was continuously checked by the second researcher. This process of utilising a second researcher that confirmed the process and product of the research study, also ensured dependability in the study (Amankwaa, 2016; Gunawan, 2015).

The following ethical considerations were implemented to ensure ethical practices and confidentiality (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021): The study was granted ethical clearance from the institution that the study originated in. As discussed above, participants' participation was voluntary, all participants consented, and they were informed of its purpose and their role in it at the outset. Participants were made aware that it was their choice to withdraw themselves from the study at any point and that they would not be pressured to continue if they chose not to. The confidentiality of the participants was secured in the findings of the study, as only the interviewer and the focus-group participants knew their identities. The questions being asked were checked by the second researcher to ensure that no psychological damage, pain or discomfort was experienced by the participants as a result of the questions being posed.

5. RESULTS

Below are five themes (referred to as factors) that outline the experiences of participants with regard to green marketing and the influence it has on their purchasing behaviours. There are two internal influencing factors: attitude and perceived behavioural control. There are three external influencing factors: subjective norms, green marketing strategies and product attributes. The internal and external factors are interdependent, and it is clear that both factors influence consumer buying behaviour. These factors and their relationships, as well as the considered factors' ability to influence buying behaviour are discussed below.

5.1 ATTITUDE

The group's attitude towards green marketing and green cleaning products was positive, however, similar to Witek (2020) and Sharma (2021) the group's positive environmental attitude had a strong conditional link. It was clear that only when the right conditions were met in terms of product attributes (i.e. price and quality) their positive environmental attitude had the potential to positively influence their buying behaviour. As stated by participant 1: *"I would want to buy it, I would want to purchase it, I want to feel like I'm doing my part. At the same time, I also need to look at my needs and what I can afford and do what's best for me...so me first, the environment, second, I'm going to focus on myself and what I can afford."*

This notion is confirmed by Arli, Tan, Tjiptono and Yang (2018) who demonstrate that attitude will only correlate to green buying behaviour when the consumer has the knowledge, time and ability to be green. This is a good example of how internal and external influencing factors like attitude and product attributes (and price) work in synergy to influence consumers' buying behaviour.

Green knowledge and the environmental awareness of the group were relatively good, however, in terms of green cleaning products and the impact normal (non-green) cleaning products have on the environment, it was not: *"I would be more inclined to buy green products if there was more of an awareness around how harmful not using green products could be"*.

The lack of awareness specifically regarding the environmental impact of normal cleaning products clearly demonstrates that consumers need to better understand how their cleaning product buying behaviour could influence further environmental degradation. Arli, Tan, Tjiptono and Yang (2018) found green knowledge and education would help consumers adopt a ready-to-be-green outlook which was the factor that attitude depended on in being effective or ineffective at influencing buying behaviour. This is evident in the present study as well, that although attitude towards green marketing and green products is positive, attitude alone is ineffective at influencing buying behaviour unless certain conditions are met due to a limited ready-to-be-green stance on cleaning products. Venuite et al (2023)

found a general lack of education and knowledge of the consumer regarding the benefits of green consumption negatively influences buying behaviour. This was confirmed by Sharma and Foroapon (2019) as well as Witek (2020) who found a direct link between environmental knowledge and purchase intention.

5.2 PERCEIVED BEHAVIOURAL CONTROL

As discussed earlier, perceived behavioural control refers to how easy or difficult it is for an individual to behave in a specific manner (Ajzen, 1991; Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020). The participants regularly discussed the perceived difficulty in going out and purchasing green cleaning products compared to the ease and convenience of purchasing traditional cleaning products: *“From what I’ve seen, they don’t have a lot of stock on green products, especially cleaning products. I mean, we went to the shops today, there was probably one green product compared to the five other ones that are just the normal ones. So, there aren’t a lot of options. In my opinion, it’s easier to just grab a normal one.”*

Hence, availability via convenience was highlighted as one of the major limiting factors. Another factor that negatively influenced perceived behavioural controls’ ability to result in buying behaviour was the overwhelming underlying perception of “steep prices” associated with green cleaning products, rendering affordability as a limiting factor: *“find a way with (the) systems or something to reduce prices so that it’s more accessible to people.”*

According to these findings, Ajzen’s perceived behavioural control variable demonstrates that consumers consume green products when they perceive themselves as able to do so. However, in this instance, they do not perceive themselves as being capable of doing so (mainly because of the cost) and therefore do not (even though they would like to).

5.3 SUBJECTIVE NORMS

Subjective norms dictate that the consumer is compelled to act a certain way as a result of perceived societal pressure (Ajzen, 1991; Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020). The group distinctly stated that their purchasing behaviour is not influenced by peer pressure but rather by inspiration and influence, however, this did not automatically mean that society and subjective norms did not influence their buying behaviour. As the conversation unfolded it was clear that family, friends, social media influencers and anyone who the participants respected or held dear to them were able to influence their perspective and attitude towards green products but not necessarily their buying behaviour regarding green cleaning products. This aligns with the findings of Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Abubakari (2020) and Nguyen, Nguyen and Nguyen (2019) who concluded that only the people who are perceived as important to the consumer can influence their buying behaviour.

Once again this highlights the synergy between internal and external influencing factors and how it works simultaneously in influencing buying behaviour (in this instance subjective norms influence attitude). As stated by participant 3: *“I went to a school which was all about recycling, all about making a good impact on the environment. So those values have been instilled in me and my mom is also someone who looks at those things, she sort of pushes me in that direction and I’ve just become that person because of the people around me as well.”* Sharma (2021) confirmed this notion that social attributes are essential in affecting attitudes towards a change in buying behaviour.

Interestingly, even though the group’s attitude is influenced by their peers, their buying behaviour is not influenced by the self-expressive benefits gained from showing their peers that they consume green products, which is contradictory to the findings of Rahlin and Gualin (2023) who found this to be the case. The group highlighted that education and schooling, as well as marketing strategies such as social media influencers, had a strong effect and even gave an example of how this is evident in their homes today among different generations: *“...could it not also be education as well though, people that grew up being educated on, I need to not use straws and this is the right way or make the earth better.”*

This again highlights how internal and external factors influence the consumers' perception of green products (attitude, green marketing strategies and subjective norms). It is clear that subjective norms can influence and evoke emotion and thought among consumers, however, it does not necessarily flow over into a change in green cleaning product buying behaviour.

5.4 GREEN MARKETING STRATEGIES

The green marketing strategies highlighted most by the group included eco-labelling and the use of social media platforms.

The participants highlighted that for the eco-label to be most effective it had to automatically stand out to them as green. As stated by participants 3 and 4: *"(the label) needs to be so that I don't have to pay attention, it needs to be right there to show that it's green. I'm not going to turn the back and read the back..."* *"...it has to be like...those symbols (on the front of a product) that sort of stand out to you on products."* They highlighted that the colour palette, symbols and design were essential for catching their attention, *"show me it's eco-friendly by the green colour palette."*

Haq, Adnan and Ali (2021) support this view as they found that eco-labelling must be used as a marketing tool in the green marketing strategy, however, the green-label design is vital for its ability to influence buying intention as it needs to be simple and easily identifiable for the consumer. Furthermore, Kahraman and Kazançoğlu (2019) noted that the use of green colours and floral-like images is essential to giving off a green natural appeal. The participants identified that the eco-labels themselves needed to be backed by more information to avoid being labelled as greenwashing. It was suggested that through the use of something like a QR code (that could be scanned for further investigation), the green cleaning product could avoid scepticism. This was also highlighted due to the lack of knowledge about official eco-stamps and labels. Some of the group members were admittedly not educated on specific green labels and their authenticity. However, participant 1 stated that the proactive provision of information surrounding the green attributes of the green cleaning product would put them at ease and avoid their scepticism of greenwashing: *"I think if they are willing to provide more information, I see that they actually want to show me evidence...so, then I trust it. In comparison to a brand that just has a 'we are eco-friendly tick' and that's it, they have a little flower and a little logo there..."*

This finding was also confirmed by Kahraman and Kazançoğlu (2019) who stated that if a product did not highlight its green attributes along with its eco-labelling consumers became sceptical and it subsequently resulted in a negative influence on buying behaviour.

The participants also highlighted social media as an essential tool in the green marketing strategies of green cleaning product companies. They stated that they engaged with social media daily and used it as a platform to gain awareness and find information. As stated by participants 1 and 2: *"...it's (something like) seeing ads through Instagram...I was trying to be natural and used natural shampoos and stuff."* *"Social media is how people share their products online, that's how you become aware of new products that have taken a turn into the eco-friendly side of things"*.

Not only did they highlight that social media is an essential marketing tool, but they also stated that it is their preferred choice of the medium through which they receive advertising: *"I think video is by far the most powerful method of communication."* This is highlighted by Rajanikanth and Banerjee (2021) who identified social media as the platform through which promotional and advertising campaigns were run as it was the preferred choice of media. Furthermore, the group identified influencers as essential in influencing their perception of products.

The discussion by the group not only identified eco-labelling and social media as effective green marketing strategies but also highlighted their ability to educate and enlighten consumers on the benefits of green cleaning product consumption through the use of QR codes and the provision of explanatory videos and information on social media. This indicates that the goal of green marketing strategies should be to educate consumers which is in line with the findings of Nguyen, Nguyen and Nguyen (2019) who stated that for a marketing strategy to be effective it should educate consumers.

5.5 PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

Throughout the focus group session product attributes were continuously referred to. Quality of the product, convenience, price, health and packaging were the attributes that were mentioned. Product attributes continuously came up in all other themes identified above and seemed to be the ultimate source of limitation or acceptance of the product among the group.

The group perceived green cleaning products to be relatively ineffective in comparison to traditional cleaning products: *"It doesn't appeal to me because I like stuff that works and so I go with what I know. Unfortunately, with cleaning stuff, harsher chemicals do the job better."* Quality was identified as something the participants were not willing to compromise on, and it was something they actively looked for when making purchasing decisions. The group understood purchasing decisions in the following way: *"When I go shopping, I look for the brand that I know does the job."* *"I don't want to compromise on quality."* *"I see them (the green cleaning products), but I always think it's not as effective cleaning-wise."*

The group agreed that convenience is a must when making purchasing decisions and found that a lack of availability was a problem and that it was inconvenient to actively look for green cleaning products as opposed to traditional ones. *"What is the easiest to find on the shelves, so not having to do crazy searches for things."* *"You are not going to now go across town to try and find the green products."*

The group further stated that they perceived green cleaning products as generally more expensive and were not able to justify such a high asking price simply due to the products' green attributes: *"Eco-friendly green marketed products are generally seen as more expensive than your standard run-of-the-mill products."* These findings are confirmed in other studies where they found the price to be a factor that enabled and disabled the consumption of green products as they are generally perceived to hold a premium price (Sharma, 2021; Haq, Adnan & Ali, 2021; Amoako, Dzogbenuku & Abubakari, 2020).

Health was a significant factor in not only influencing consumers' attitude towards green cleaning products, but, in cases where health was clearly negatively impacted as a result of traditional cleaning product consumption, a switch to green cleaning products seemed plausible (if it could alleviate these negative impacts). As stated by participant 1: *"I think of my health first and then that it's probably less toxic, so it's better for it to be around my house."* This is in line with Witek (2020) findings of the importance and influence of health and safety attributes for consumers.

The data shows the packaging of cleaning products to be important, the less waste the better. This is from both a convenience and environmental impact point of view. As stated by participants 3: *"There's nothing left behind - you fold the box up, recycle and you're left with minimal waste."* According to participant 5: *"...knowing that I can recycle that product or I'm not going to be creating waste in the normal bin with the product that I buy."*

Consumers will only buy green products when they meet the standards of traditional products concerning quality, performance, availability and convenience (Witek, 2020). The discussion of the findings above clearly demonstrates the influence that product attributes have on buying behaviour. The data showed the group's attitude to be positive but conditional with the deciding factors being product attributes such as price, quality, convenience and health. Furthermore, the data also shed light on the lack of perceived behavioural control of the group with the product attributes of convenience and price as the limiting factors. Lastly, green marketing messages need to educate consumers on the effectiveness and quality of green cleaning products as they are perceived to be less effective than the traditional alternative. Moreover, consumers should also be informed about the health and environmental benefits of using green cleaning products and the dangers associated with using conventional cleaning products.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the results of the study, it is clear that green marketing efforts clearly have a positive influence on the attitude and awareness of green cleaning products; however, it fails to influence buying behaviour unless certain conditions such as price, quality and convenience, are met. These three external factors were highlighted as the major limitations in the ability of green marketing for cleaning products to successfully influence the intended buying behaviour of the participants. It is evident that the consumers perceive the influence that the green marketing of cleaning products has

on their buying behaviour as minimal. Marketing efforts alone are not enough, these consumers clearly highlighted that there is a lack of knowledge regarding the importance of changing buying behaviour regarding cleaning products specifically. The limitations of the study are the limited timeframe, scope, and sample size within which the study was conducted. However, it does provide valuable insights as a starting point into the effectiveness of green marketing for various eco-friendly products.

The results of this study can be valuable for organisations involved in the marketing of green cleaning products because they will help identify the critical success and failure factors associated with effective green marketing. Furthermore, this study could assist these organisations in fine-tuning their green marketing efforts in order to develop a more comprehensive green marketing approach. Additionally, participants gained a better understanding of their own buying behaviour and the factors that affect it as a result of the study. Furthermore, other consumers could also become more aware of the influence green marketing has on their own buying behaviour. It is clear that more research is needed to understand the current effectiveness of green marketing practices in various product categories to better understand how to market to consumers more effectively, and ultimately understand what the effect of green marketing is on consumer buying behaviour. It is recommended that further studies in the field of green marketing is done with consumers in various other product categories to understand the effectiveness of marketing strategies, that could ultimately inform future marketing approaches.

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