

# Consumer Behavior towards Green Cosmetics Considering E-WOM as an Intervening Variable: A Comprehensive Literature Survey

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## Abstract

The market for eco-friendly cosmetics has grown significantly in the last few years. Concurrently, there has been a rise in scholarly interest in the topic. However, the information is inconsistent overall. Despite the growing corpus of literature, no thorough compilation and integration of empirical research examining the variables associated with green cosmetics purchase behaviour (GCPB) has been carried out. This study makes an effort to close this gap. We conducted this systematic review. The elements of the theory of planned behaviour that were most commonly demonstrated as determinants were attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Then came the "marketing mix, consumer consciousness issues, consumer values, brand-related attributes, experience and knowledge, self-efficacy, and perceived barriers". Consequently, this research will aid in the understanding of the knowledge barrier by academics. Moreover, the findings of this review will help marketers frame their marketing strategies for promoting green cosmetic products.

**Keywords:** Green cosmetics; Purchase Behavior Systematic Review; Sustainability, E-WOM.

## Introduction

Consumer behaviour is the study of people, groups, or associations, as well as a range of behaviours related to the procurement, utilisation, and disposal of all goods and services that customers can receive. Cosmetics is one of these things that clients have a large selection to pick from. It's an accessory designed to enhance one's appearance. By 2021, it is anticipated that the skin, hair, colour, and oral care components of the Indian cosmetics market would bring in 11 billion Indian rupees. Many Indian women have won Miss Universe (1994), Miss World (2006), Miss Asia Pacific (1970, 1975), and Miss Universe (1994) since the 1990s were liberalised. Herbal and organic cosmetics are more popular among Indian consumers. With a current market valuation of US\$950 million, the Indian cosmetics industry has been growing at a rate of almost 20% per year. It fits within the UNDP's 2030 sustainable development goals under the categories of industry, innovation, and infrastructure. The Indian cosmetics industry has made a name for itself as one of the unique industries with enormous growth potential. The market share of this industry is expected to

grow by 18% a year. This increase is mostly due to the rising demand for organic and herbal cosmetic products. The Indian cosmetic industry is a result of consumers' growing demand for goods, especially those that are natural or organic. Some of the leading companies in India are Shanazhussain, Lotus, VLCC, Biotique, Himalaya Herbals, Lakme, Revlon, Oriflame Cosmetics, and Dabur. Because of this, the market for green cosmetics has grown significantly during the last few years. It follows that by 2027, the global market for organic or green cosmetic goods is expected to be valued USD 54.5 billion. The global market for organic and natural cosmetics is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.1 to 9.76 percent, according to market research organisations. Concurrently, there has been a rise in scholarly curiosity about the usage and intake of eco-friendly cosmetics. The idea of "green" cosmetics has two main issues: components and processing. Therefore, a wide range of sustainability attributes are covered by their definition, including chemical-free and natural (organic) solutions, conventional renewable raw materials (such as renewable plant and bacterial sources), and locally sourced ingredients that are processed using environmentally friendly formulations and marketed in packaging that supports the environment.

Cosmetics businesses have been exploiting natural claims to sway consumers' opinions and encourage them to make purchases, as well as producing and marketing their goods as sustainable. Scholars have been paying more and more attention to green cosmetics lately. Global green cosmetic consumer behaviour is still not fully understood because, despite an increasing body of literature, no systematic review has been conducted to compile and synthesise the empirical studies that have looked at factors predicting green cosmetics consumer behavior. Therefore, the goal of the current study is to close this gap by thoroughly analysing previous research on the factors that influence green cosmetics consumer behavior. Consequently, this research will aid in the understanding of the knowledge barrier by academics. Additionally, the review's conclusions will assist marketers in formulating their plans for promoting eco-friendly cosmetics.

## Review of Literature

### Green Cosmetics

Today's society continually emphasises physical attractiveness and beauty as desirable and praiseworthy qualities, which includes cosmetics. The impact of representation in contemporary culture has been the subject of several research (Joy and Venkatesh, 1994; Picot-Lemasson et al., 2002). Physical attractiveness and beauty are consistently emphasised as desirable and praiseworthy attributes. Most people appear to have an innate urge to become more physically appealing (Adams, 1977; Etcoff, 1999; Winston, 2003). Numerous research works have examined how the portrayal of attractive women affects female consumers. Historically, only women have purchased cosmetics (Dino et al., 1972). Cosmetics are substances applied to the human body to improve its appearance or smell. Regardless of how beauty is defined in different cultures, there is a lot of evidence to support the claim that beauty sells (Naikdimen, K.A 1984). Because physical attractiveness gives people easy access to nonverbal quasi-information about a person in the form of personality illusions, it is significant in interpersonal interactions (Rubinstein, R.P. 1985). People can

modify their appearance, and makeup and other exterior decorations are used to sway the nonverbal messages they want to convey (Bloch, P.H., & Richins, M.L 1992). According to Melanie K. Cumings (2001), cosmetics are an essential part of modern life and a common element of women's consumer culture. They also play a significant role in how women display and alter their public personas. Cosmetics are important because they are a tool for self-examination, and women use them to audition different selves (Bloch P.H. & Sherrell Richins, M.L. 1992). (Beausolil N 1994).

## E-WOM

The way individuals communicate has changed and been made easier by the Internet. For instance, it has made it easier to share one's own thoughts and experiences. Word of mouth (WOM) has gained a fresh, innovative viewpoint thanks to this technological advancement, which has also given rise to the term "Electronic Word of Mouth" (eWOM). "Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or past customers about a product or company, which is made available to many people and institutions via the Internet" is the definition of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) according to Hennig et al. (2004). In addition to being referred to as "online word of mouth" and "internet word of mouth, (Goldenberg et al., 2001), 'buzz marketing' (Thomas & Greg 2004). Vilpponen et al. (2006) mentions eWOM in other ways in the literature, such as "electronic word of mouth communication" (Hennig et al., 2004). Electronic word of mouth is provided by social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (eWOM). Social media has become a vital and powerful tool for supporting and promoting consumer and organisational activities and communications that transcend temporal and spatial boundaries. According to Kizgin et al. (2018), social media has made electronic word of mouth (eWOM) possible. eWOM has expanded as a result of increased Internet usage. One benefit of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is that communication tactics have gotten more accustomed to and quick with technology, especially the Internet (Teng et al., 2014). Through the Internet, a message can be distributed to hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people through Electronic Word of Mouth (e WOM) (Cakim, 2009; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Sohn, 2014). A message transmitted using electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) can spread swiftly (Hung & Li, 2007; King et al., 2014). Despite several drawbacks, eWOM is nevertheless regarded as a potent marketing tool overall (Sen & Lerman, 2007; Sweeney et al., 2012). According to a recent study, eWOM significantly and favourably influences bank customers' buying intentions (Vahdati et al., 2016). Therefore, customer eWOM has a major impact on their intention to buy on social networking sites. According to Shabsogh et al. (2012), "there is little correlation between source characteristics and trustworthiness."

## Green Consumer Purchase Behavior

The study of consumer behaviour focuses on how people choose which consumption-related goods to purchase using their available resources, such as time, money, and effort. This covers the items people acquire, their motivations for doing so, when and where they buy them, how frequently they buy and use them, how they evaluate the items after they are purchased and how that evaluation affects their ability to make future purchases, and how they dispose of them. Marketers in Eastern Europe (Kaynak and Samli,

1986) and the third world (Albaum and Peterson, 1984) place a high premium on customer behaviour research. Following the assurance of both physical and financial access to its products, a business must assess consumer purchasing patterns in the target nation. However, little is known about consumer attitudes, buying habits, purchase motives, lifestyles, etc., in Eastern Europe and Third World countries (Kaynak and Samli, 1986). Marketers who seek to enter these markets might therefore find it necessary to engage in some priority marketing research relating to such issues (Peterson, 1985).

## **Research Methodology**

We carried out this systematic review. A systematic review extensively scans all reports published on a subject to find answers to a clearly defined research question. The research is based on descriptive design.

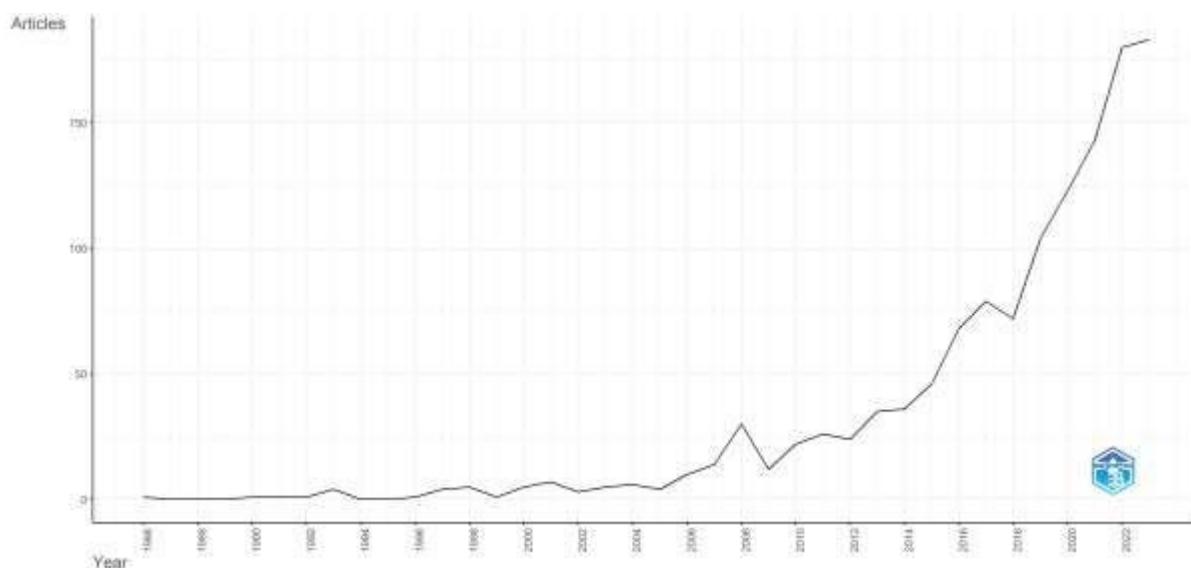
### ***Search Strategy***

We conducted a broad, date-independent search of Scopus, the biggest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature, to find pertinent papers. Using Boolean operators to combine search phrases, we created the search strings. Some search terms included “Green Cosmetics” OR “Organic Cosmetics” AND “EWOM”.

### ***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

The scope of our search was restricted to excluding conference proceedings and non-English papers, as well as any literature that was not pertinent to our investigation. Only quantitative empirical research that looked at the factors influencing consumers' intentions and behaviours to purchase green cosmetics while taking the mediating effect of E-WOM into account were included. 1500 records were obtained from the electronic databases. 668 records remained after duplicates were eliminated. Other researchers then independently reviewed the abstracts and titles. 401 records were removed after that. Lastly, we evaluated the full-text publications that were left. 267 of these articles met the requirements for eligibility.

## Data Analysis



(Source: Biblioshiny)

Researchers paid close attention to slow fashion in the decades before to this one, as seen by the publication trend displayed in Fig. 1. The first two studies on GCPI were published in 1986 and 1990, respectively, based on the extraction process results, which turned up a total of 1200 articles. Figure 2 clearly demonstrates that the yearly number of publications was in the single digits prior to 2006. After thereafter, the publishing trend kept showing double digits; it peaked in 2023 and reached a three-digit level in 2019.

## The Theory of Planned Behavior

“Subjective norms (perceived social pressure from others to engage in or not engage in a particular behaviour), perceived behavioural control (perceptions of people's ability to perform a given behaviour), and attitudes (i.e., overall positive or negative evaluations) are said to influence both intentions and behaviours, according to the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that intentions lead to behavior; however, intentions do not always guarantee behavior. For example, someone might intend to meditate everyday but not follow through. There are several factors that influence the strength of the relationship between intentions and behavior. Several studies have revealed significant impacts of TPB constructs on GCPB and/or GCPI, supporting this notion”.

## Findings

The review's findings show a strong and favourable correlation between the theory of planned behavior's attitude, norms, and perceived behavioural control (GCPI) variables. Attitude was the most frequently demonstrated predictor of GCPB mediating EWOM, followed by perceived behavioural control and norms. These results suggest that the theory of planned behaviour can offer a helpful framework for understanding consumer intentions and behaviours when they make environmentally friendly purchases. When developing promotional campaigns targeted at boosting customers' intents to buy green cosmetics, it's critical to take into account their perceptions of the product in order to foster a positive attitude.

Commercial messaging can highlight the norm of purchasing eco-friendly cosmetics in today's culture and highlight the effects of peer pressure. Furthermore, marketers should focus on increasing consumers' trust in eco-friendly cosmetics by informing them about their certified organic and eco-friendly products. The current analysis shows that price sensitivity, price consciousness, product sensory appeal, and product sensorial expectations were the marketing mix variables that strongly influenced the GC. Therefore, eco-friendly cosmetics should be priced fairly, and consumers should be fully informed of the differences in costs between eco-friendly and non-organic items. In order to increase consumers' inclinations to make a purchase, green cosmetics marketers can also inform consumers about the advantages of their products. Lastly, when creating and promoting their products, companies should take into account the sensory qualities of their offerings (such as colour, aroma, oiliness, and greasiness). Consumer values and consciousness have been shown in numerous research to be crucial factors of GCPB. Thus, rather of concentrating just on the advantages of the product, consideration should also be given to the hedonic value (e.g., beautiful design, packaging, and labelling) while producing green cosmetics. Hedonic value can also be leveraged through positive emotional appeals such as pride, pleasure, joy, and tenderness. Marketers should also consider highlighting the health benefits of their environmentally friendly makeup products. Since consumers who are very pessimistic are reluctant to buy green cosmetics, marketing strategies can emphasise the ecological and health benefits of these products. Given the strong negative correlations that psychological barriers like tradition and image barriers have with the purchase intentions of eco-friendly cosmetics, marketers and retailers can develop promotional programmes that emphasise the benefits of their eco-friendly cosmetics over conventional alternatives. Promotional campaigns should emphasise the advantages of using eco-friendly cosmetics in terms of environmental well-being, particularly ecological beauty, product safety, and reasonable costs, in order to sway the attitudes and behavioural intents of environmentally conscious consumers. Encouraging green cosmetics can help the environment by showcasing their cost-effectiveness, ecological beauty, and product safety. Customers who care about the environment will benefit from this in terms of attitudes and behaviour intentions.



*Figure 4- Word Cloud of GCPB*

## Conclusion

The goal of this systematic review was to gather empirical studies that examined the variables affecting GCPB. The ten theme clusters that we identified for the components associated with GCPB are "attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, marketing mix, consumer consciousness concerns, consumer values, brand-related attributes, experience and knowledge, self-efficacy, and perceived barriers." The creation of marketing strategies to promote environmentally friendly cosmetics will benefit from these findings.

## Limitations and Future Research Implications

Furthermore, each green cosmetic company can have something unique to offer, which could cause differences in the perceptions of green products among consumers. Therefore, future research can examine the determinants of GCPB by comparing two or more green cosmetic goods. Moderating factors and the complexity of the research model can also be considered in subsequent studies. The theoretical diversity in the relevant literature is another avenue for further research. Scholars, for example, endorse a greater variety of theoretical frameworks than only trait theory of personality (TPB), including numerous value theories, trait theory of personality, and attitude-behavior-contextual theory. Subsequent research endeavours may also focus on methodological choices and data characteristics. Since cross-sectional survey methodologies were employed in the majority of the studies in this evaluation, future research should consider implementing an experimental or mixed-method study design. Moreover, using a more diverse data analysis technique is better than using SEM-PLS.

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