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ARTICLE

An Empirical Assessment of the Mediation Effect of Business Concern exhibited by Indian Consumers on the Relationship between Environmental Concern and Environmental Conscious Behavior

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Abstract

The environmental effects of consumption have become a serious issue. Environmental degradation has intensified over recent years due to rapid economic growth and ensuing overconsumption. For a business, green orientation is both an opportunity and a challenge. Enterprises are targeting greener substitutes for their consumers. Consumers' response to green marketing has also been favorable. Still, the switching behavior (i.e., in favor of green products) of consumers is a slow process because a shift from a non-green product to a green product requires a sacrifice from consumers in the form of paying a higher price for the green product and reduced income due to job cuts in specific industries that are not eco-friendly. India, as an emerging market, is experiencing rapid economic growth with increased urbanization and changes in consumption patterns that are contributing to environmental hazards. Given India's emerging economic context and growing urbanization, green behavior often entails perceived personal and economic trade-offs. This study, therefore, investigates the relationship between environmental concern (EC) and environmentally conscious consumer behavior (ECCB) in India, while exploring the mediating roles of pro-business concern (PBC) and anti-business concern (ABC). Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 262 Indian consumers. Constructs were measured using validated scales, and mediation analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings of the study suggest that while Indian consumers express concern for the environment, their behavior may be directly driven by attitude rather than filtered through business-related concerns. The study contributes to green consumer literature in emerging markets and recommends focused policy initiatives to promote ECCB across demographic segments.

Keywords: Environmental concerns, environmental conscious consumer behavior, business concerns, Indian consumers, mediation effect.

1 Introduction

Planet Earth, green, eco-friendly, sustainability, environment, climate, SDGs, etc., are some of the buzzwords that we all hear daily. The environmental concern that was a scattered movement by a few in some parts of the world in the 1970s

and 80s has today caught the attention of people worldwide, as we are witnessing the frequent fury of nature in the form of earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones, cloud bursts, wildfires, floods, droughts, and the list is endless. The issue speaks of gravity when it is taken up by the UN and enforced on member nations to show their contribution towards the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) by 2030. As a result, businesses are now aligning their models to the green opportunities and pressures. Businesses are also targeting consumers to adopt a green lifestyle. Consumers' response to green marketing is positive, yet the battle is long, as adopting green ways demands sacrifice from consumers in the form of shelling out a higher price for the green products. This is so because green products have just made inroads into the market and require a huge demand to be able to sell at a lower price than non-green products. Added to this is the excessive consumption that consumers indulge in, due to round-the-clock business marketing strategies, which again put strain on the available resources and our environment. This also poses a challenge to the green marketers to not only profile the characteristics of the green consumers but also to understand their green purchase behavior. However, the issue is not as simple from the consumers' perspective because being a green consumer demands sacrifice in the form of paying higher prices for green products and reduced income due to job cuts in specific industries that are not eco-friendly, which again pinches the pockets of the consumers. So, a consumer may wish to be a green consumer but is forced to adopt non-green choices due to the overbearing survival motive.

Poverty and social issues have always been the underpinning factors of five-year plans in India. However, over the past few decades, nature's fury on India's geographic terrain has put environmental concerns at the forefront, along with poverty alleviation and social development goals. The ecological damage due to unmindful industrialization, urbanization, deforestation, and unchecked resource exploitation has raised a big question about the kind of development we are aspiring for. As a result, the focus of all future development goals in India is now gradually shifting towards SDGs to hand over a livable planet to our future generation. Much of the earlier research on green consumer behavior was in the context of developed countries (Kinneare et al., 1974; Lynne & Rola, 1988; Prothero & McDonagh, 1992; Oreg & Katz-Gerro, 2006; Polonsky et al., 2012; Leire & Thidell, 2005). Such research has gained momentum in India only in the past decade (Bhatia & Jain, 2013; Sharma & Bansal, 2013; Sharma & Gadenne, 2014; Khare, 2015; Prakash & Pathak, 2017; Jaiswal & Kant, 2018). Recent studies in the context of India highlighted that Indian consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about the environment in their buying behavior (Biswas and Roy, 2015; Khare, 2015; Kumar et al., 2017; Verma and Chandra, 2018; Yadav and Pathak, 2017; Jain et al., 2020; Jaiswal et al., 2021; Kumar et al. 2021; Mishra and Kulshretha, 2023; Sharma et al., 2023; Laheri et al., 2024).

2 Literature Review

Earliest work on ecological marketing by Kinnear et al. (1974) identified two dimensions of consumers' ecological consciousness, viz., attitudes that express concern for ecology and purchasing behavior that is consistent with the conservation of the environment. Roberts (1996) defined ecologically conscious consumers as those whose purchase decisions are based on the perceived impact (positive or less negative) of those purchases on the environment. According to D'Souza et al. (2006), green consumers are those who always look out for eco-friendly products. Banyte et al. (2010) defined green consumers as those who consciously purchase eco-friendly products and are continuously involved with environmental issues and seek solutions for the same. Thus, the past studies have established a strong relationship between environmental concern and ecologically conscious behavior of consumers, and this relationship holds even today, as evidenced from the recent studies (Lopes et al., 2024; Laheri et al., 2024; Sharma et al., 2023; Barbu et al., 2022)

2.1 Environmental Concern

Environmental Concern (EC) refers to the emotional manifestation of consumers (such as worries, dislikes, compassion, etc.) toward environmental issues (Milfont & Gouveia, 2006; Schultz et al., 2004; Roberts, 1996; Lee, 2009). Many past studies observed that increased environmental awareness culminates in a positive attitude toward eco-friendly products (Karatu & Mat, 2014). However, many earlier studies also found a non-significant (Tracy & Oskamp, 1984) to weak or moderate correlation (Berger & Corbin, 1992) between environmental concern and pro-environmental behaviors (Bamberg, 2003).

2.2 Environmental Conscious Consumer Behavior

The driving force behind the environmental conscious consumer behavior (ECCB: also referred to as pro-environmental behavior or green behavior or ecologically conscious consumer behavior) is the gratification or gain to society as a whole, rather than individual benefits and costs that drive the general purchase behavior of consumers. Also, green behavior results in future gains as opposed to instant gain from the general purchase behavior (McCarty & Shrum, 2001). Past studies identified environmental concern, welfare orientation (Stern et al., 1993), and value orientation (McCarty & Shrum, 2001) as the key motives towards the environmentally conscious behavior of consumers. The ECCB construct was measured using a 30-item scale developed by Roberts (1996) and Roberts and Bacon (1997). The individual items were measured through the Likert scale.

Past studies used the construct environmental concern as an antecedent to environmental conscious behavior such

as organic food consumption, recycling (Park & Ha, 2012), renewable energy (Bang et al., 2000; Kaur & Thukral, 2022), choice of products such as laundry detergents (Kinnear et al., 1974), cosmetics and toiletries (Prothero & McDonagh, 1992) and ecological behavior (Lynne & Rola, 1988). However as pointed out earlier, this relationship between environmental concern and environment conscious behavior is not always simple and direct specially in the context of developing country like India where the per capita income is still low and exhibiting green behavior is at a cost viz., using public transport requires sacrifice of convenience, purchasing green products is always expensive than non-green ones such as purchasing e-vehicle is costly than others vehicles, 5 star rated appliances cost more than the few star rated ones. Similarly, green businesses will indirectly harm non-green businesses and consequently the job market by forcing the workforce to acquire new skill sets while making the existing skill force and technology redundant. This may indirectly affect the environmental concern and environmentally conscious behavior of some segment of consumers. Accordingly, pro-business concern and anti-business concern are the other two intervening variables investigated for their effect on the proposed relationship between EC and ECCB.

2.3 Pro-Business and Anti-Business Concerns as Mediators in Environmentally Conscious Consumer Behavior

A growing body of literature supports the notion that consumers, especially in urban and semi-urban areas, are increasingly aware of the environmental implications of their consumption patterns (Peattie, 2010; Gleim et al., 2013). Despite this awareness, the attitude-behavior gap exists, where positive environmental attitudes do not necessarily result in environmentally responsible behavior (Carrington et al., 2010). This disparity is particularly relevant in the context of developing countries like India, as socio-economic realities shape the consumption behavior. India, as a lower-middle-income country (World Bank, 2023), is characterized by a demography that largely depends on industries (including MSMEs) and agriculture for livelihood. These sectors often face scrutiny due to their environmental impact. However, any ecological regulation or consumer-driven boycott against such industries can adversely affect the economic security of large sections of the population, thereby leading to resistance against environmental movements. This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Ling-yee (1997) and Do Paço & Raposo (2009), who argue that contextual and economic realities frequently moderate consumer concern for the environment. To further understand this complexity, the present study incorporates two mediating constructs: Pro-Business Concern (PBC) and Anti-Business Concern (ABC). These constructs provide insight into how consumers balance their environmental attitudes with their economic priorities and ideological positions toward businesses.

Pro-Business Concern (PBC)

Pro-business concern refers to a consumer's tendency to support business activities and industrial growth, especially when such support is perceived as vital for economic development and job creation (Mohr et al., 1998). In the Indian context, individuals with a pro-business orientation may deprioritize environmental concerns if they believe that environmental regulations or green consumerism could hinder business operations, increase product prices, or result in job losses. One can say that ecological attitudes are suppressed by economic pragmatism, thereby weakening the link between environmental concern and green behavior.

Anti-Business Concern (ABC)

Conversely, anti-business concern reflects a critical view of corporate practices, particularly those that are exploitative or environmentally damaging. Consumers with high levels of ABC are more likely to hold businesses accountable for environmental degradation. They may engage in boycott behaviors or choose eco-labeled products even at a premium (Auger et al., 2003). In such cases, environmental concern is positively reinforced by distrust in business motives, thus strengthening the pathway to green consumer behavior.

These two constructs function as mediating variables that can either strengthen or weaken the relationship between environmental concern and actual behavior. The mediating role of such factors is supported by Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1991), which posits that behavior is not only guided by attitudes but also by subjective norms and perceived behavioral control—both of which are influenced by societal, economic, and ideological conditions (Patel et al., 2022). Furthermore, the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Theory (Stern, 2000) suggests that individual actions stem from deeply held beliefs, which in turn are shaped by broader societal concerns such as economic stability and corporate influence.

3 Objectives and Hypotheses of the Study

As evidenced by the above review of literature, it is important to investigate whether environmental concern is merely lip service (by way of observing Earth Hour, celebrating Earth Day) or transforms into actual behavior and action. The present study, therefore, investigates the Indian consumers' attitude (EC- environment concern) as well as actual behavior (ECCB- environmental conscious consumer behavior) towards green purchase or in terms of green action. The purpose of the current study is to develop and test the effect of environmental concerns on the green behavior of consumers in India. In light of the above discussion, the objectives of the present study are:

i. To study the relationship between environmental concern and environmentally conscious behaviour of Indian consumers.
ii. To study the mediating effect of the pro-business concern of Indian consumers on the proposed relationship.
iii. To study the mediating effect of anti-business concern of Indian consumers on the proposed relationship.

iv. To study the demographic differences in the environmentally conscious behaviour of Indian consumers.

Review of literature revealed that many studies investigated the relationship between EC and ECCB in developed countries (Kinneare et al., 1974; Lynne & Rola, 1988; Prothero & McDonagh, 1992; Leire & Thidell, 2005; Oreg & Katz-Gerro, 2006; Do Paço & Raposo, 2009; Polonsky et al., 2012; Barbu et al., 2022; Lopes et al., 2024). However, the number of such studies being undertaken in a developing country like India is still evolving (Bhatia & Jain, 2013; Sharma & Bansal, 2013; Khare, 2015; Jaiswal & Kant, 2018; Verma & Chandra, 2018; Jain et al., 2020; Mishra & Kulshretha, 2023; Laheri et al., 2024). So, the present study tries to add to the body of literature on green consumers by investigating a few relevant constructs in the Indian scenario. The study investigates the direct relationship between EC and ECCB of Indian consumers and the mediating effect of ABC and PBC on this relationship.

In light of the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed in the present study:

H_1: Environmental Concern (EC) of Indian consumers is significantly positively related to their Environmental Conscious Consumer Behavior (ECCB)

H_2: Pro-business Concern (PBC) significantly mediates the relationship between EC and ECCB

H_3: Anti-business Concern (ABC) significantly mediates the relationship between EC and ECCB

H_4: Demographically, Indian Consumers differ in their Environmental Conscious Behavior.

$H_{4.1}$: Environmental Conscious Consumer Behaviour (ECCB) differs for male and female Indian consumers.

$H_{4.2}$: Environmental Conscious Consumer Behaviour (ECCB) of Indian consumers differs according to their age.

$H_{4.3}$: Environmental Conscious Consumer Behaviour (ECCB) of Indian consumers differs according to their education level.

$H_{4.4}$: Environmental Conscious Consumer Behaviour (ECCB) of Indian consumers differs according to their income level.

4 Research Method

4.1 Survey instrument

The independent variable, EC, and the dependent variable, ECCB, were measured using the scales developed by Roberts (1996). However, the original 12-item and 30-item scales, respectively, had words that were laden with scientific names that may be difficult to understand for the general public and are also not widely used in Indian households. Accordingly, these statements were dropped, resulting in 10-item and 19-item scales, respectively. Additionally, two more scales were used in the present study to measure pro-business concern (PBC) and anti-business concern (ABC) of Indian consumers, given their green concern. These were self-developed 2-item and 3-item scales, respectively. These abridged scales for ECCB and EC, along with the new scales developed for the present study, were then pre-tested on a sample of 50 respondents via personal interview to understand the problems faced in interpreting the scale items. The inputs from pre-test results helped in removing ambiguity in the scale items, thereby enhancing clarity. Using feedback from the respondents, a few scale items were dropped, and a few were slightly modified to enhance the respondents' understanding of the scale items. The final scale for ECCB was measured using an 11-item scale, and the scale for EC was measured using an 8-item scale. For PBC and ABC, 2-item and 3-item scales, respectively were retained with minor modifications.

4.2 Sample and data collection

An online survey questionnaire was developed to collect the data. The data was collected by sending emails to the initial contact list of the researcher. The email invited them to participate in the study and contained a link to the online survey. Survey invitations were sent to about 500 email contacts, guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality for the respondents, and informing them that the gathered data would be used for academic or scientific publications only. Two follow-up emails were then sent in a gap of 15 days. The respondents were also requested to share the survey link with their contacts to increase the response size. Overall, 262 valid responses were received.

Section A of the questionnaire related to the demographic details of the respondents. Section B consisted of items measuring different constructs used in the study. Each of these statements was rated by respondents on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (means strongly disagree) to 5 (means strongly agree). 8-item and 11-item scales were used to measure the core constructs EC and ECCB. To study the mediation effect, 2-item and 3-item scales were used that measured the constructs PBC and ABC. The data collected through survey questionnaires were initially analyzed for descriptive statistics. The data was further tested for proposed hypotheses using techniques like ANOVA, regression model, confirmatory factor analysis, and path-mediation analysis using SEM.

4.3 Sample Profiling

The analysis of the demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 1. Most of the respondents were from North India. Of the total respondents, 48.5% were male, 52.7% had a graduate degree, and 26.7% had a postgraduate degree. The age brackets of the majority of respondents were 21-30 years (47.3%) and 31-40 years (17.6%). While most of the respondents were students (47.7%), those in employment (23.7%), business (10.7%), and profession (8.8%) constituted 43.2% of respondents. The majority of the respondents belonged to the middle-income category (68.7%).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographics	Levels	Counts	% of Total
Gender	Female	135	51.5
	Male	127	48.5
Age	20 years or below	32	12.2
	21-30 years	124	47.3
	31-40 years	46	17.6
	41-50 years	43	16.4
	51 years & above	17	6.50
Education Level	Graduate	138	52.7
	Post-graduate	70	26.7
	Professional	24	9.2
	Schooling	30	11.50
Occupation	Business	28	10.7
	Employed	62	23.7
	Housemaker	23	8.8
	Professional	23	8.8
	Retired	1	0.4
	Students	125	47.70
Income Level	high-income group	47	17.9
	high middle-income group	92	35.1
	low middle-income group	88	33.60
	low-income group	35	13.4

**n=262, Source: Author's research output*

5 Data Analysis

5.1 Reliability and Validity

Reliability of the scales was measured through Cronbach's alpha. The value of more than 0.70 suggests internal consistency in the constructs (Hair et al., 2012; Nunnally, 1978). Reliability coefficients of two constructs, EC and ECCB, were more than the recommended value of 0.70, as shown in Table 2. For the other two constructs, PBC and ABC, the Cronbach alpha value was 0.53 and 0.65, respectively. These were 2-item and 3-item scales, which may be the reason for their low Cronbach value. Therefore, to further test the reliability of the constructs used in the study, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated.

Table 2: Reliability & Validity Statistics of Measurement Constructs

Variables	No. of Items	Mean	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	ECCB	EC	ABC	PBC
ECCB	11	3.96	0.824	0.866	0.503	0.709	-	-	-
EC	8	4.24	0.833	0.882	0.518	0.585*	0.719	-	-
ABC	3	4.07	0.625	0.794	0.565	0.372*	0.555*	0.752	-
PBC	2	3.47	0.538	0.799	0.666	0.278*	0.194*	0.246*	0.816

**p < .001, Source: Author's research output*

Table 2 shows the CR and AVE values of all the constructs used in the study. The value of CR for all constructs is higher than the minimum requirement of 0.70, and the values of constructs' convergent validity (Average Validity Extracted-AVE) are higher than the 0.50 minimum value (Hair et al., 2012). The Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) demonstrated that the square root of AVE values of all the reflective constructs was higher than the inter-construct correlations, indicating discriminant validity of the constructs (refer to Table 2). This suggests that scale can be used to perform model fit analysis.

5.2 Factor Analysis

The constructs used in the study were then factor analyzed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis. For each construct, the p-value was significant, confirming a significant correlation between the scale items. On applying Confirmatory Factor Analysis, scale items having factor loadings less than 0.40 were dropped to increase the robustness of the scale. CFA results are shown in Table 3. These factors were labelled ECCB (environmental conscious consumer behavior), EC (environmental concern), PBC (pro-business concern), and ABC (anti-business concern). All the scale-items of each construct as used in this study were retained as their factor loading were above the threshold limit.

Table 3: Result of Factor Loading of Measurement Items

Constructs	Scale Items	Factor Loading
ECCB	ecb1	0.503
	ecb2	0.537
	ecb3	0.411
	ecb4	0.480
	ecb5	0.570
	ecb6	0.427
	ecb7	0.638
	ecb8	0.653
	ecb9	0.659
	ecb10	0.584
	ecb11	0.630
EC	ec1	0.453
	ec2	0.666
	ec3	0.475
	ec4	0.602
	ec5	0.779
	ec6	0.698
	ec7	0.723
	ec8	0.644
PBC	pbc1	0.616
	pbc2	0.597
ABC	abc1	0.502
	abc2	0.703
	abc3	0.612

Source: Author's research output

5.3 CFA Model Fit Indices

Model fitness was tested for the proposed model with the retained scale items using Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The leading fit indices, i.e., χ^2, CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR, are tested to evaluate model fitness. Table 4 presents the results of CFA. The model fit values of χ^2, CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR were within the recommended limits. The fit indices of the structural model are χ^2 = 7.60, CFI = 0.971, RMSEA = 0.026, SRMR = 0.037. The fit indices indicate that the structural model has adequate goodness of fit to the data. After obtaining satisfactory results for the measurement model, the constructs were examined through the mediation model to test the hypothesized relationships.

Table 4: Model Fit Indices

Parameters	χ^2	**p-value**	**CFI**	**GFI**	**Adj. GFI**	**SRMR**	**RMSEA**	**RMSEA p**	**TLI**
Observed Value	7.60	0.006	0.971	1.000	0.996	0.037	0.159	0.026	0.828

Source: Author's research output

6 Discussion

6.1 Regression Model Results

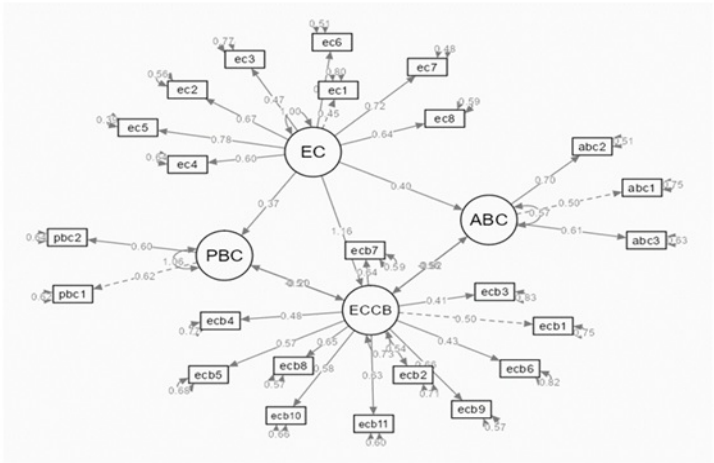
The full mediation model was run using SEM to test the hypothesized relationships. The results of the complete mediation model are presented in Fig.1 and Table 5. It can be concluded from the analysis of the results that a direct relationship between EC and ECCB is significant, thus accepting the hypothesis H_1. Adjusted R-square of the regression models indicates that 36.99% of the variance in ECCB is accounted for by EC (direct relationship). Further, this value is 30.82% for ABC and 3.76% for PBC, which are the mediating variables to the relationship between EC and ECCB. Overall, the model explains 71.57% of % variance in the relationship between EC and ECCB.

Table 5: Mediation Analysis Predicting ECCB

Effect	Path Model	Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable	Estimate	B	p
Direct	**EC –> ECCB**	ECCB	EC	0.5309	0.5332	< .001*
Direct	**ABC –> ECCB**	ECCB	ABC	0.0293	0.0357	0.609
Direct	**PBC –> ECCB**	ECCB	PBC	0.1129	0.1660	0.004*
Direct	**EC –> ABC**	ABC	EC	0.6745	0.5552	< .001*
Direct	**EC –> PBC**	PBC	EC	0.2841	0.1940	0.004*
Indirect	**EC –> ABC –> ECCB**	ECCB	EC	0.020	0.020	0.612
Indirect	**EC –> PBC –> ECCB**	ECCB	EC	0.032	0.032	0.061

**p-value significant at 0.05 level*, *Source: Author's research output*

Figure 1: SEM Full Mediation Model



Source: Author's research output

6.2 Full Mediation Model Results

The direct relationships between EC –> ECCB, EC –> ABC, EC –> PBC, and PBC –> ECCB were found to be significant (Table 5). However, the direct relationship was not significant for variables ABC –> ECCB. The indirect full mediation effect for mediators, ABC and PBC, on the proposed relationship (EC → ECCB) was found to be insignificant, with p-values of 0.612 and 0.061, respectively (Table 5). Therefore, hypotheses H_2 and H_3 are rejected for the full mediation effects of ABC and PBC on the relationship between EC and ECCB. However, the partial mediation holds, due to a significant direct relationship between EC and PBC as well as PBC and ECCB. Anti-Business Concern (ABC) reflects a general skepticism or negative sentiment toward corporate behavior. While this may relate to environmental views, it does not directly drive consumer purchasing behavior (ECCB) unless strongly linked to product-level decisions. Pro-Business Concern (PBC) reflects positive perceptions of corporate responsibility. While this can enhance support for green brands, it may not mediate EC's impact unless consumers directly connect business trust with their consumption actions. Since EC has a substantial direct effect on ECCB (B = 0.5332, p < .001), suggesting that consumers act on their own environmental beliefs, regardless of their stance toward business. When the direct effect is already strong (Adjusted R^2 value for the direct relationship between EC-ECCB is 36.99% and 30.82% for EC-ABC; also, p-value is significant for the direct relationship between EC-PBC and PBC-ECCB), there is less variance left to be explained through mediation, leading to insignificant indirect effects. Moreover, environmental concern is more personal and intrinsic, while ABC/PBC reflect attitudes toward external entities (businesses). Also, consumers at times are motivated more by personal values than corporate perceptions when engaging in environmentally conscious behaviors (ECCB). As a result, consumers' concerns do not always pass through their business perceptions to shape behavior.

6.3 ANOVA Results for Demographic Differences

One-way ANOVA result using Welch's Test was performed on demographic variables and ECCB. The results are shown in Table 6. Age-wise and income-wise demographic differences in ECCB of Indian consumers appear significant at the *p=0.05 level.* Particularly, older consumers (51+) have the highest ECCB score, suggesting they may be more cautious, experienced, and aware of environmental impacts. Younger and middle-aged groups show less consistent behaviour, perhaps due to lifestyle constraints or priorities. Hypothesis $H_{4.2}$, stating that age affects ECCB, is accepted. Higher income groups show higher ECCB, likely because they can afford eco-friendly products, which often come at a premium and have greater exposure to sustainability education or values. Hypothesis $H_{4.4}$, which posits that income impacts ECCB, is

accepted. Gender-wise, the results show that males and females in India do not differ in their ECCB. Both genders show similar levels of ecological consciousness in their consumption behaviour. Hypothesis $H_{4.1}$, which posited that gender affects ECCB, is rejected. Similarly, no significant differences were observed in the ECCB of the Indian consumer belonging to different education levels. Education does not play a significant role in shaping ecologically conscious behaviour in Indian consumers. This may indicate that awareness about sustainable consumption is relatively consistent regardless of education. Hypothesis $H_{4.3}$, stating that education influences ECCB, is rejected. To summarize, age and income are significant influencers of ECCB among Indian consumers. Gender and education level, despite seeming relevant, do not have a measurable impact on ECCB in this study. The findings indicate that economic capability and life experience (age) are more closely linked to sustainable behaviour than mere educational attainment or gender differences.

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing of Demographic Differences Using One-Way ANOVA (Welch's Test)

Demographic Variables	*Level*	*N*	*Mean*	*F Value*	*P Value*
Gender	Female	135	4.19	2.09	0.149
	Male	127	4.30		
Age	20 years or below	32	4.16	2.71	**0.037***
	21-30 years	124	4.31		
	31-40 years	46	4.16		
	41-50 years	43	4.08		
	51 years & above	17	4.49		
Education Level	Graduate	138	4.24	1.68	0.181
	Post-graduate	70	4.36		
	Professional	24	4.08		
	Schooling only	30	4.09		
Income Level	high-income group	47	4.43	2.98	**0.035***
	high middle-income group	92	4.27		
	low middle-income group	88	4.15		
	Low-income group	35	4.14		

*n=262, *p-value significant at 0.05 level, Source: Author's research output*

7 Conclusion

The accelerated pace at which environmental deterioration is happening worldwide due to rapid economic growth and mindless consumption has led to increased environmental concerns. This study was undertaken to examine Environmentally Conscious Consumer Behaviour (ECCB) among Indian consumers, with a specific focus on the direct impact of Environmental Concern (EC) on ECCB and the mediating role of Anti-Business Concerns (ABC) and Pro-Business Concerns (PBC) in that relationship. ABC signifies consumers may distrust businesses for harming the environment, whereas PBC signifies consumers believe businesses can be responsible contributors to sustainability. A strong and statistically significant direct relationship was found between EC and ECCB. This means that as consumers become more concerned about environmental issues (e.g., pollution, climate change, resource depletion), they are more likely to engage in behaviour that reflects eco-consciousness, such as buying green products, recycling, reducing waste, etc. This aligns with earlier research on green consumer behaviour, emphasizing attitude and concern as critical precursors to pro-environmental behaviour. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results confirmed that the theoretical model used in the study was a good fit, meaning that the structure and relationships among constructs were valid for explaining ECCB in the Indian context. This strengthens the reliability and applicability of the model to similar consumer segments or emerging economies. The SEM result showed that EC is significantly related to ECCB, ABC, and PBC. This suggests that concern about the environment influences consumers' broader attitude toward businesses and their practices. While EC was significantly linked to both ABC and PBC, and PBC was also significantly related to ECCB, the mediating (indirect) role of ABC and PBC between EC and ECCB was found to be insignificant, implying the impact of environmental concern on behaviour is direct primarily, rather than operating through beliefs about businesses. It can be concluded that positive business perceptions (PBC) influence ECCB on their own, and not via a mediation effect on EC–ECCB.

8 Implication

The correlation between EC and ECCB holds significant ramifications for policymakers and marketers alike. EC acts as a central psychological driver in shaping green behaviors. This supports the notion that attitudes often precede actions–meaning that enhancing consumer attitudes through sustained environmental education and engagement is essential before expecting shifts in behavior. The selection of environmental friendly items by consumers is the outcome of both psychological and rational analysis. By examining the role of two mediators between consumers' green attitudes and their willingness to purchase green products–which were not examined in the previous studies–the suggested model

expanded on the earlier research on green consumers. Though the mediators Anti-Business Concern (ABC) and Pro-Business Concern (PBC) did not significantly explain the pathway between EC and ECCB, the direct relationship between EC-ABC, EC-PBC, and PBC-ECCB emerged significant. This implies that consumers act more on their personal values and environmental ethics rather than on their perceptions of business conduct when it comes to green purchasing. Therefore, efforts to influence behavior should not rely solely on corporate reputation (positive or negative) but should focus on strengthening individual environmental responsibility and intrinsic motivation. From a social marketing perspective, public policy campaigns should aim to build personal accountability by showing the tangible impact of consumer actions on environmental outcomes. Green campaigns should emphasize how every individual action contributes to systemic change—such as reductions in pollution, conservation of biodiversity, and improved community health. Social marketing efforts by policymakers can raise awareness of individuals' impact on environmental causes, leading to increased engagement in pro-environmental behavior.

For marketers, the findings suggest that simply promoting a company's "green image" may not be enough unless it connects with consumers' pre-existing environmental values. Furthermore, marketers can strategically pair environmental campaigns with Pro-Business Concern (PBC)—for instance, by showing how green innovation leads to job creation, economic growth, or local development. Marketers must educate consumers about the actual impact of their purchasing decisions on environmental conservation. Green purchases not only benefit the environment and society, but also contribute to the country's economic prosperity. When two aspects of environmental consciousness—environmental concern and PBC—are paired together, customers' attitudes towards buying green products can be significantly influenced. Hence, marketers can successfully mold a favorable attitude towards the purchasing of green products by pairing environmental concern with PBC.

9 Limitations & Direction for Future Research

First, the external validity of our findings was constrained by the sampling strategy. The urban consumer is the source of the data. Greater insights into consumers' green attitude and behavior would emerge from a more diverse sample that included a representation of rural consumers. Future research should include diverse geographic and demographic segments, particularly rural populations, to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of green behavior across societal contexts. Secondly, the study concentrated on the environmentally conscious behavior and environmental concerns of consumers. Concern for the environment might arise from a broader constellation of factors such as cultural, personal, political, psychographic, ethical values, or product-related (Stern et al., 1993; Sharma & Gadenne, 2014). These dimensions were not included in the current model, creating opportunities for future studies to build a multidimensional framework incorporating these drivers. Third, the present study focuses on intentions and attitudes, rather than actual consumer behavior. However, the attitude-behavior gap is a well-established concern in sustainability research (Carrington et al., 2010). Consumers may express strong pro-environmental attitudes yet fail to act on them due to situational barriers (e.g., cost, convenience). Therefore, future studies should employ behavioral tracking or purchase data to examine real-world actions. Fourth, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits causal inference. Future research can benefit from longitudinal or experimental designs to observe how green attitudes and behaviors evolve over time or in response to interventions such as eco-labeling, social influence, or policy changes. Fifth, though the model explored ABC and PBC as mediators, their insignificant effect points to the need for alternative mediating variables—such as personal moral norms, perceived behavioral control over product choice, environmental self-identity, social norms, and peer influence (Jansson et al., 2010). Nevertheless, this study points towards the significant direct relationship between EC-ABC, EC-PBC, and PBC-ECCB. Therefore, these mediating variables can be studied as causal variables in future research. Sixth, moderating effects of income, education level, or digital exposure can be investigated to assess whether the EC–ECCB relationship varies across different consumer segments (Ling-Yee, 1997). Seventh, future studies can also explore the effect of strategically framed advertisement that highlights environmental benefits, community impacts, or green endorsements in inspiring pro-environmental actions.

In sum, this study reaffirms that environmental concern remains a foundational predictor of green consumer behavior, even when attitudes toward business are neutral or inconsistent. The implications are vast for both theory and practice. However, the limitations also open up rich avenues for future investigation into the psychological, cultural, and social dynamics that shape sustainable consumption.

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