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CAN SPIRITUALITY DRIVE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION INTENTION?

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ABSTRACT

The climate change and environmental depletion has made sustainable consumption a rising area of investigation with the purpose of understanding the factors influencing such phenomenon. Nevertheless, with the external factors such as infrastructural, institutional and policy changes have been recognized as insufficient, there does not exist a concrete consensus on which factors may drive an individual towards sustainable consumption. Hence, the present paper aims to examine possible factors which may have an influence on sustainable consumption intention incorporating spirituality through the contribution of Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Social Cognitive Theory of Moral Agency. A cross sectional survey was conducted in the study with a sample of 250 urban-educated consumers in the Colombo District using a convenience sample. The data collection was conducted with a self-administered questionnaire while Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with AMOS was utilized for the analysis. The findings revealed a positive impact from both attitude towards sustainable consumption and perceived behavioral control on sustainable consumption intention. In contrast, subjective norms were recognized as statistically insignificant in its impact. Spirituality was revealed with a positive impact on attitudes towards sustainable consumption leading to sustainable consumption intention. Thus, this study contributes to the enhancement of the prediction power of Theory of Planned Behavior with spirituality as a behavioral belief. Hence, the findings reflect that inner changes in an individual have the possibility that may drive sustainable consumption intention. The paper, therefore, concludes with the strong revelation that spirituality plays a major role in an individual, affecting the attitudes towards sustainable consumption, ultimately resulting in sustainable consumption intention. Further, the paper suggests the policymakers and environmental authorities on the importance of incorporating spirituality enhancement programs in driving an individual towards sustainable consumption.

Key Words: Spirituality, Sustainable consumption intention, Behavioral beliefs, Attitudes towards sustainable consumption

1. Introduction

Sustainable consumption has become a contemporary issue in globally as a result of climate change. Global Footprint Network (2020) indicated that the earth's crust, natural resources, and are being overused by the today's population for their consumption which leads to clima te change damaging the planet. Public in Colombo has been blamed for wasting approximately ecosystems 40% of the water given to the country's family units (Imitiaz, 2017). In any event, it has been established that cars and residential emissions account for more than 60% of total air pollution (Razick, 2020). Hence, sustainability has become vital for many stakeholders with the increased use of ecological resources in comparison to capacity of nature in regenerating (Pfeffer, 2010). In response, policymakers and other responsible authorities have introduced several legislations aiming the restriction of unsustainable consumption (Central Environment Authority, 2018). Nevertheless, even in the existence of technological, infrastructural, and institutional changes achieving sustainability is observed to be an arduous task without an inner change in people (Ulluwishewa, 2018). In support, moral self-identity has been recognized to have an influence on the green purchase intention (Samarasinghe & Ahsan, 2014). Furthermore, spiritually minded consumers have given those who practice sustainability a new viewpoint (Hunting & Conroy, 2018).

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1985) is observed as a significant theoretical approach in studying sustainable consumption and related behaviors towards the environment. Despite the fact that prior studies have used TPB in the prediction of sustainable and environmental behavior, one of the most neglected factors which is suggested to be investigated further in relation to the theory is spirituality (Galib et al., 2018). Wood and Bandura (1989) stated that a person is led by spiritual experiences towards narrow self-conception enabling empathy towards others which results from individual's beliefs such as spirituality referring to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of Moral Agency. Hence, spirituality could be incorporated as a behavioral belief having an influence on the attitudes towards sustainable consumption through the lens of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) of Moral Agency.

Spirituality is emerging in the recent studies in relation to consumption decisions. Further, prior studies have established that spirituality plays a vital role consumption decision (Baumeister, 2002; Dyson et al., 1997) and sustainable/green behaviors (Joshi & Rahman, 2019; Lestar & Böhm, 2020), though spirituality has been often studied in other contexts. Further, this study incorporates attitudes towards sustainable consumption (Joshi et al., 2019) since Cleveland et al. (2005) have recognized general environmental attitudes as a poor predictor of behavior. These gaps in literature led the aim of the present study, which is to examine the possible factors influencing sustainable consumption intention and the influence of spirituality as a behavioral belief in enhancing the predictive power of TPB. In response, the tenets of TPB and SCT of Moral Agency were utilized in the conceptualization. First, attitude towards sustainable consumption (ATT), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) have been considered as the factors which may impact sustainable consumption intention (SCI) (Joshi et al., 2019; Joshi & Rahman, 2017; Yadav & Pathak, 2017) through the lens of TPB. Secondly, through the basis of SCT of Moral Agency, spirituality was introduced as a behavioral belief. Thus, associations among ATT, SN, PBC, SP, and SCI have been theorized.

Hence, this paper arrives with two major contributions to the existing body of literature. Firstly, spirituality is validated empirically as a behavioral belief influencing the attitude towards sustainable consumption leading to sustainable consumption intention. Secondly, sustainability being a contemporary issue, the author believes that the findings may support the policymakers and other responsible authorities in understanding the importance of how and why spirituality could be integrated with the initiatives they implement in promoting sustainable consumption. The rest of the paper follows structure of; subsequent section presenting the literature review leading the conceptualization of the constituents underlying the present study at first. The succeeding section is devoted in elaborating on the methodology, followed by the results and discussion. In line with the implications of the study, the conclusion follows the discussion setting the directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

TPB was developed as a progression of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). TPB comprise of an additional component of Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC). Ajzen (1991) stated in the theory, it is the salient beliefs which determines the intention which in turns leads the behavior. Behavioral, normative, and control beliefs are assumed to impact attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control respectively. Prior studies reveal TPB as a valid model for sustainable behaviors to be investigated (Arvola et al., 2008; Yadav & Pathak, 2016). SCT contemplates individuals to be agentic operators in their life despite just being hosts onlooking brain mechanisms created by environmental events. SCT comprises of knowledge structures individuals use in setting goals, evaluating their achievement, and preserving motivational focus through self-reflective processes where self-beliefs and ascriptions are built leading to affective and behavioral propensities (Bandura, 1999, 1986). Further, it was stated that the capacity possessed by an individual in exerting a degree of control over their actions and further occurrences in the environment are being identified by the theory (Bandura, 2001).

The intensifying crisis in sustainability has the led the focus of production-side policies in the reduction of the influence they have on the environment. Nevertheless, with the sustainable practices of companies being dwarfed by the increasing consumption, it is important to understand the patterns of transformation in human consumption (Yadav & Pathak, 2017). Hence, sustainable consumption has risen as an interesting area of research. Sustainable consumption intention can be defined as; “Behavior which intends to meet the needs of the current generation and benefit the environment without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to satisfy their needs” (Leary et al., 2014, p.1954). Various perspectives such as values, attitudes, norms, lifestyles, environmental concerns, trust and several other factors have been investigated in studying sustainable consumption in prior studies intentions (Liobikienė et al., 2017; Tripathi & Singh, 2016; Tanner & Kast, 2003). Further, spirituality is an emerging antecedent of consumption, sustainability, and related behaviors (Joshi & Rahman, 2019). The present study uses antecedents drawn from TPB and spirituality as the constructs in conceptualizing the theoretical problem.

Ajzen (1991, p.188) has defined attitude as “the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question”. In recent literature,

depending on the context of use attitude has been revised on how it is being defined. Joshi and Rahman (2017, p. 7) clearly defined attitude towards sustainable consumption as; "a consumer's cognitive evaluation of sustainable consumption behavior," which would be used in the present study. Attitude is reflected as a significant predictor of environmentally responsive consumption intentions (Chou et al., 2012; Gupta & Singh, 2018). Nevertheless, with the mixed observations with strong (Joshi et al., 2019; Hines et al., 1987) and poor impact (Davis, 1995) from attitudes on environmental and sustainable behavior, it has been suggested for further investigations in relation to sustainable consumption intention (Joshi & Rahman, 2017; Zhao et al., 2014). Therefore, the following hypothesis was built;

H1: Attitude towards sustainable consumption impacts on sustainable consumption intention

Subjective Norms (SN) are defined as "the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). Positive associations among social groups or social norms and sustainable behavior could be observed in prior literature as; intention to recycle and recycling behavior (Connell, 2010; Wan et al., 2012) and purchase intention of sustainable products and behavior (Joshi & Rahman, 2017; Lee, 2010). Nevertheless, few empirical studies on sustainable consumption practices such as electricity conservation (He & Kua, 2013; Kua & Wong, 2012) and consumption of items with low involvement (Kuenzel & Musters, 2007) have revealed that there is either no association or weak association from SN. Hence, with the prior studies reflecting mixed results investigating further is necessary leading to the hypothesis of;

H2: Subjective norms impact on sustainable consumption intention

Perceived behavioral control is the extension of theory from TRA to TPB which is defined as "the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). Prior studies reveal a positive impact from PBC on the intention of various context of research including organic foods (Thøgersen, 2008; Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005), green products (Moser, 2015) and green hotels (Han et al., 2010; Chen & Tung, 2014; Teng et al., 2015; Chang et al., 2014). However, as stated by Arvola et al. (2008), a non-association is observed between PBC and green purchase intention while Wiederhold and Martinez (2018) suggested the impact of PBC on SCI to be further investigated. Hence, the following hypotheses was built;

H3: Perceived behavioral control impacts on sustainable consumption intention

Spirituality has been evolving in its conceptualizations carried in prior studies. As Pargament (1999) stated spirituality is a process where people seek the discovery of the sacred, and hold on to, transforming towards it when needed. Despite the fact that positive associations from spirituality have been observed on attitudes in prior studies (Curasi et al., 2004; Pandey et al., 2009; Thompson, 2004), there exist an ambiguity on how spirituality influences consumer choices. Few other studies revealed low spirituality having an impact on unethical behavior (Rodriguez-Rad & Ramos-Hidalgo, 2018; Swimberghe et al., 2011; Vitell et al., 2007; Vitell et al., 2011; Weaver & Agle, 2002). However, with the association among spirituality and attitude towards sustainable consumption being under researched the following hypotheses was built;

H4: Spirituality impacts the attitude towards sustainable consumption

Based on the above arguments and literature review the following conceptual framework was established as Figure 1.

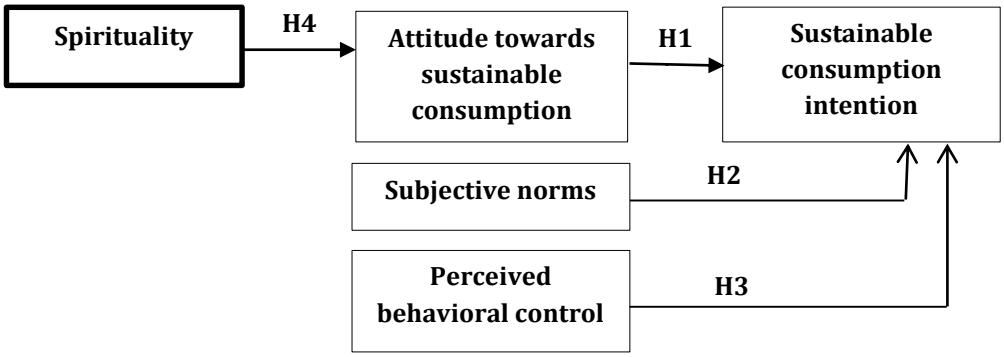

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

At the outset, 300 structured self-administered questionnaires (Colombage & Galahitiyawe, 2020) were distributed in the survey personally among urban educated consumers in the Colombo district, from which 250 questionnaires were collected yielding an 83.3% effective response rate. Due to the fact that, they could easily respond to the survey and the concepts of green products and sustainable environmental practices and such practices gaining acceptance in urban areas, the unit of analysis in the current study is an individual urban educated consumer, which has recently been established in literature in the context of sustainable and environmental behavior (Yadav & Pathak, 2017). It is impossible to precisely determine the size of Sri Lanka's urban educated customers which is the population of this study. Hence, a sample of the population is chosen to examine sustainable consumption intentions. A convenience sample was used for the survey aligning to the fact that non-probability sampling methods could be incorporated where necessary if a sampling framework is not available (Saunders et al., 2019). ATT, SN and PBC were operationalized using a three-item scale measured with a likert scale (1 – Strongly Disagree to 7 – Strongly Agree) developed and validated by Joshi et al. (2019) and Kim and Han (2010) respectively. Spirituality was operationalized with a four-item scale measured with a likert scale (1 – Strongly Disagree to 7 – Strongly Agree) developed by Stillman et al. (2012) which was later validated by Joshi and Rahman (2019). SCI was operationalized using a three-item scale developed by Wang et al., (2014) with a likert scale ranging from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree.

4. Results and Discussion

Initially, outliers and missing values were treated using IBM SPSS 21.0 software (Galahitiyawe & Jayakody, 2019). It was followed by the demographic analysis and multivariate assumptions as outline by Hair et al. (2019). Bias tests were conducted according to Harman's Single Factor method (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and One-way ANOVA test (significance value of 0.558) revealing the absence of common method bias and non-

response bias. According to the study, the first factor is accountable for 28% of the variance. As a result, the fact that the greatest factor explained was less than 50% indicated that no single factor accounted for the majority of covariance. Based on the study's data, it was determined that the resulting values of skewness and kurtosis met the -3/+3 limit level (Appendix II), indicating that the data was normal. The relationships proposed were assessed for linearity and homoscedasticity assumptions using P-P plots. The correlation values obtained by each of the independent variables in the present study are less than 0.9 indicating the absence of multicollinearity problems in the current data set (Appendix III). The Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) 20.0 statistical analysis software was used in conducting the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the confirmation of multivariate assumptions. The discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and reliability (Appendix I) were established in the study confirming to the threshold levels while convergent validity was affirmed with the factor loadings being above 0.7 (Appendix I) (Hair et al., 2019). The structural model (Appendix IV) established reflected path significance revealing ATT, PBC with statistically significant impact on SCI while SN was found statistically insignificant as illustrated by Table 2. Further, the Table 1 provides the evidence that SP has a statistically significant impact on ATT leading to SCI. Hence, except for the second hypothesis (H_2) which proposed that subjective norms impact sustainable consumption intention the rest of the hypothesis were supported.

Table 1: Direct relationships

Hypothesis	Standard Beta Value	P-value	Decision
H1: Attitude towards sustainable consumption impacts on sustainable consumption intention	0.462	0.000	Supported
H2: Subjective norms impact on sustainable consumption intention	-0.007	0.878	Not supported
H3: Perceived behavioral control impacts on sustainable consumption intention	0.275	0.000	Supported
H4: Spirituality impacts on the attitude towards sustainable consumption	0.371	0.000	Supported

Source: Author Constructed.

The results suggest the higher likelihood for sustainable consumption intention by the urban educated consumers possessing attitudes towards sustainable consumption. Though few studies have observed a weak influence from consumer attitudes on sustainable consumption practices (Davis, 1995), the present study's findings align with the fact that the cognitive assessment of the importance of consumption activities leading sustainable practices (Chan, 2001). Further, the revelation of higher likelihood of sustainable consumption practices from the perceived behavioral control which is in line with prior literature stating that a person with required confidence, skills, and resources in carrying out the intended behavior are more likely to act towards it (Armitage et al, 1999, Wang et al., 2014). Hence, despite the fact that few studies reveal a non-association between perceived behavioral control and green purchase intention (Arvola et al., 2008) which is similar to the present study context these findings, the current findings further

verify the empirical outcomes of the prior study on environmentally friendly behavior in Sri Lanka (Gunarathne, et al., 2020). Subjective norms have been revealed to have a positive influence on sustainable consumption practices and environmentally conscious consumer behavior in a number of previous research (Joshi & Rahman, 2017; Gupta & Singh, 2018). However, with strong influences from ATT and PBC, urban educated consumers are not likely to be affected by the pressures they get from the colleagues, close friends, and family in attending sustainable consumption. Ajzen (1991), justifies the above finding stating that, subjective norms may get ignored when personal factors heavily influence the intention which was later complemented by Park and Ha (2014) in a study on recycling intention. In addition, spiritual urban educated consumers have a higher tendency to possess attitudes towards sustainable consumption which confirms the prior literature suggesting consumers with spirituality (Hunting & Conroy, 2018) creating a new trend in making sustainability requests.

5. Conclusions and Implications

In conclusion, the present research had significant theoretical implications enhancing the prediction power of TPB. Due to the fact that external factors such as policymakers' initiatives and legislation aimed at restricting unsustainable consumption practices have not worked well without an internal change in people, this study attempted to expand existing knowledge about the possible factors having an impact on sustainable consumption intention which could drive them to practice them (Ulluwishewa, 2018). Despite the fact that TPB has been employed in the prediction of sustainable and environmental behavior in previous studies, spirituality is one of the most overlooked variables which should be investigated further in relation to the theory (Galib et al., 2018). Using the above as a foundation, this study integrated spirituality as a behavioral belief to TPB with the potential to influence attitudes toward sustainable consumption. As a result, spirituality having a beneficial impact on attitudes toward sustainable consumption is another theoretical addition, demonstrating spirituality as a behavioral belief influencing attitudes and so improving TPB's predictive value. This leads to the managerial implications to the policymakers highlighting the importance of integrating spirituality in their initiatives driving the individuals towards sustainable consumptions practices. Meditation programs in schools with environmental themes, as well as increasing workplace spiritual practices, would help present and future generations develop their spirituality, which will improve their attitudes toward sustainable consumption, leading to sustainable consumption intention. Finally, the present study set the avenues for future research including the possibilities for examining other psychological factors in different samples and contexts. Perhaps for the first time, the present study indicates that without an inner change in individuals, driving sustainable consumption is difficult, even in the presence of production-side policies and government regulations restricting unsustainable consumption practices.

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Appendices

Appendix I – Factor loadings, AVE, and Reliability measures

Variables	Standard factor loadings (Min-Max)	AVE estimates	Reliability
Attitude towards sustainable consumption	0.803 – 0.872	0.720	0.857
Subjective Norms	0.807- 0.890	0.752	0.904
Perceived behavioral control	0.823 – 0.925	0.775	0.915
Spirituality	0.693 – 0.870	0.629	0.866
Sustainable consumption intention	0.723 – 0.865	0.633	0.822

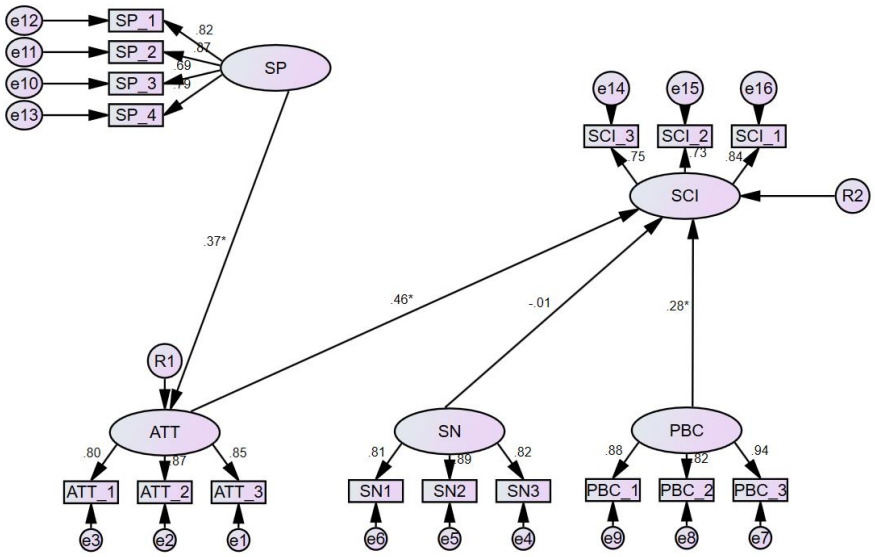
Appendix II - Normality

Item	Skewness	Kurtosis
ATT_1	-.337	-.636
ATT_2	-.258	-.476
ATT_3	-.183	-.579
SN_1	-.284	-.648
SN_2	-.124	-1.290
SN_3	-.427	-.683
PBC_1	-.722	-.463
PBC_2	-.622	-.530
PBC_3	-.586	-.654
SP_1	-.101	-.831
SP_2	-.153	-.541
SP_3	-.029	-.542
SP_4	-.214	-.761
SCI_1	.232	-1.068
SCI_2	.015	-1.064
SCI_3	-.156	-.933

Appendix III – Correlation

Variables			Estimate
ATT.	<-->	SN.	-.021
ATT.	<-->	PBC.	.824
ATT.	<-->	SP.	.799
ATT.	<-->	SCI.	.619
SN.	<-->	PBC.	.204
SN.	<-->	SP.	-.043
SN.	<-->	SCI.	-.014
PBC.	<-->	SP.	.729
PBC.	<-->	SCI.	.630
SP.	<-->	SCI.	.616

Appendix IV – Structural Model



Note: *Significant at 5% level of significance, CMIN/DF – 2.153, GFI – .914, RMR - .043, RMSEA - .054