

## **Distinctive Role of Gender in Profiling Green Consumers: Analysing Environmental Attitude and Green Consumer Behaviour of Undergraduate Students**

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**Abstract:** *The projections of environmental problems have raised concerns about the deteriorating quality of environment that has drastically started impacting every forms of life on the planet. Human interventions for survival have a significant role in this regard. The living and consumption patterns of humans have immensely added up to the escalating depletion of nature. The aspiring young generation have a prominent role in the future of sustainable consumption in exercising considerable power and responsibility in making informed choices that cause minimal detrimental impact on the environment. Hence this study is intended to profiling young consumers by gauging the environmental attitude and green consumer behaviour focusing on the distinctive role of gender. The study was conducted on a sample of 225 undergraduate students of Kerala. Data was collected using standardised tools and were subjected to mean difference analysis so as to examine the gender difference in environmental attitude and green consumer behaviour of the students. The results of analysis revealed that significant gender difference exists for the variables among undergraduate students. A larger mean score obtained for female students for both variables indicate that females have more positive inclination towards environment; and the green consumer behaviour was found predominant in females when compared to male students. The study gave insight on the distinctive role of gender in profiling undergraduate students as green consumers. This calls for specific strategies in education for nurturing and fostering socially responsible behaviours like the green consumer behaviour among young citizens for building sustainable communities.*

**Keywords:** *Green Consumer Behaviour, Environmental Attitude, Higher Education, Sustainability, Gender, Undergraduate Students.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Environmental problems are becoming intensively perennial due to severe impact of human developmental activities. The intricate links cannot be taken for granted. The role of education in rebuilding nexus between humans and nature and for refining the intellects in order to rediscover the sublime nature is far reaching in this extremely turbulent scenario. Education as a noble function creates integrated and dynamic citizens capacitated with independent thinking and rationality in thoughts and actions. The serenity of education lies in its function of connecting humans with nature and the world at large. Educational initiatives specifically at higher education (HE) level must inspire in nurturing the divine qualities for environmental stewardship.

In this purely consumerist era, the youth population constitute a considerable part of consumer population around the world. The future of sustainable consumption vests in the hands of these aspiring youth who can exercise significant power and responsibility in making informed choices that cause minimal detrimental impact on the environment. Education can play a vital role in developing positive attitude towards the environment thereby transforming young consumers in to environmentally responsible green consumers. Nurturing the biophelic sensitivity which is an outcome of the ecological paradigm shift, could be a pathfinder towards education for nurturing green consumer behaviour. Socialisation of individuals also takes place through education. This would in turn have significant impact on the students to assume distinct roles in the society. Socialisation also determines consumer behaviour of genders across cultures (Zelezny, Chua & Aldrich, 2000). Hence it is imperative to comprehend the nature of gender roles with respect to the environmental attitude and the green consumer behaviour of undergraduate students. Educational experiences must rightly enrich the students with adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes required for environmental stewardship. HE institutions as centres for excellence must cater to the

immediate needs of the society and contribute towards addressing the issues prevailing. A big leap towards this is producing cognizant citizens adorned with qualities of global citizenship.

#### **NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE**

In this continually deteriorating environmental scenario, the role of education must be considered as paramount in sensitising individuals to follow paths of sustainable living. Several researches have confirmed the pivotal role of education in fostering the desired behaviours and dispositions needed for building sustainable communities. Education has the potential for awakening environmental consciousness among individuals which in turn have significant effect on the consumer behaviour (Follows & Jobbers, 2000).

According to the theory of socialisation, human behaviour depends on socialisation of individuals. This may result in gender differences in attitudes and behaviours of students. Almosawi (2014) observed that environmental attitude was positively associated with undergraduate students' green consumer behaviour. On the contrary, some researchers have observed environmental attitude as a weak factor in influencing green consumer behaviour of undergraduate students (Sachitra *et al.*, 2017; Tan & Lau, 2011). Yet another set of research findings revealed that environmental attitude was one of the most influencing factors determining green consumer behaviour (Sinnappan & Rahman, 2011).

The findings regarding environmental attitude and green consumer behaviour are found to be diverse. Hence it was felt by the researchers to gain an indepth understanding of the status of the selected variables relating to undergraduate students of Kerala. This would in fact give insights on how the dispositions and behaviours are environmentally oriented among the youth in a purely consumerist state like Kerala. Apart from this, the findings are also expected to provide insights on the potential role of attitudinal variable in influencing green consumer behaviour which could be focused by educators and policy makers while planning strategies and programmes specifically intended towards fostering environmentally responsible consumer behaviour for sustainable living. Hence the present study attempted to examine the gender differences in environmental attitude and green consumer behaviour of undergraduate students.

#### **VARIABLES OF THE STUDY**

The variables included in the present study are as follows-

1. Environmental Attitude
2. Green Consumer Behaviour

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study are given below.

1. To examine the gender differences in Environmental Attitude of undergraduate students.
2. To examine the gender differences in Green Consumer Behaviour of undergraduate students.

#### **METHODS OF THE STUDY**

A description about the methods used for the present study is given below. This includes details regarding the sample selected, tools used and the statistical techniques employed for arriving at generalisable results.

##### **Sample**

The population of the study consists of undergraduate students pursuing B. Com Degree courses in colleges affiliated to University of Calicut, Kerala. Out of these 225 undergraduate students pursuing B. Com were selected as sample.

##### **Tools for the Study**

Data pertaining to Environmental Attitude of students was measured by adopting the Environmental Attitudes Inventory (EAI) developed by Milfont & Duckitt (2010). The responses of the EAI were rated on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (7) to Strongly Disagree (1). The scores of Green Consumer Behaviour of undergraduate students were measured using a standardised tool developed by the investigators. The scores were rated using a 5 point Likert Scale for assessing the frequency of behaviour. The ratings ranged from Always (5) to Never (1) for positive items and the reverse scoring for negative items of the scale.

##### **Statistical Techniques for the Study**

The collected data was subjected to statistical analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS version 20 of IBM. The statistical techniques used for the present study are the following:

1. Basic Descriptive Statistics like Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Skew and Kurtosis.
2. Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores.

## II. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Basic descriptive statistics was done to analyse the nature of distribution. Test of significance of difference between the mean scores was carried out for determining the gender differences in Environmental Attitudes and Green Consumer Behaviour of undergraduate students.

### Basic Descriptive Statistics

In order to determine the nature of data, the basic descriptive statistics like mean, median, mode, standard deviation, skew and kurtosis were computed. The results of basic descriptive statistics of the variables Environmental Attitude and Green Consumer Behaviour are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Statistical Constants of Environmental Attitude and Green Consumer Behaviour of Undergraduate Students (N=225)

Sl. No.	Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
1	Environmental Attitude	57.40	58	61	6	.214	-.415
2	Green Consumer Behaviour	62	61	60	6	.706	.570

From Table 1 it is evident that the mean (57.40), median (58) and mode (61) for Environmental Attitude are almost equal. The standard deviation (6) shows that the scores do not deviate much from the mean score of Environmental Attitude of students. The skew (.214) indicates that the distribution is slightly positively skewed. The kurtosis value (-.415) indicates that the distribution is slightly platykurtic. The overall evaluation of the descriptive statistics indicates that the distribution was approximately normal.

In the case of Green Consumer Behaviour, the mean (62), median (61) and mode (60) are almost the same. The standard deviation (6) indicates that the scores do not deviate much from the mean value obtained for Green Consumer Behaviour. The skew value (.706) indicates that the distribution is positively skewed. The kurtosis (.570) indicates that the distribution is leptokurtic. In totality, the values of descriptive statistics indicate that the distribution was approximately normal.

### Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores

Test of significance of difference between the mean scores was carried out to determine the gender difference in Environmental Attitude of undergraduate students. Mean difference analysis was also done to determine the gender difference in Green Consumer Behaviour of the students.

#### Gender Difference in Environmental Attitude

The statistical technique of test of significance of difference between the mean scores was employed to find out the gender difference in Environmental Attitude. The result of mean difference analysis relating to gender differences in Environmental Attitude is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Environmental Attitude on the Basis of Gender

Variable	Male			Female			t value	Sig.
	N <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>		
Environmental Attitude	115	56.28	5.623	110	58.56	7.136	2.660**	p<.01

\*\* Significant at .01 level

Table 2 reveals that the critical ratio (t value = 2.600, \*\* p<.01) obtained is greater than 2.58 which is the value of significance at .01 level. Hence it can be inferred that there exists significant gender difference in Environmental Attitude of students. The mean value obtained for male students sample is 56.28 and that of female students is 58.56. Hence it is observed that the attitude of female students towards environment is more favourable when compared to their male counterparts.

#### Gender Difference in Green Consumer Behaviour

The statistical technique of test of significance of difference between the mean scores was employed to find out the gender difference in Green Consumer Behaviour. The result of mean difference analysis relating to gender differences in Green Consumer Behaviour is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Test of Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Green Consumer Behaviour on the Basis of Gender

Variable	Male			Female			t value	Sig.
	N <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>2</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>		
Green Consumer Behaviour	115	60.65	5.101	110	63.47	6.439	3.650**	p<.01

\*\* Significant at .01 level

From Table 3 it is evident that the critical ratio ( $t$  value = 3.650,  $**p < .01$ ) obtained is greater than 2.58 which is the value of significance at .01 level. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is significant gender difference in Green Consumer Behaviour of undergraduate students. The mean value obtained for the male student sample is 60.65 and for female student sample is 63.47. Since the mean is higher for females, it can be inferred that Green Consumer behaviour is more predominant in female students when compared to their male counterparts.

### III. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Significant gender difference was found in the Environmental Attitude of undergraduate students ( $t = 2.660$ ,  $**p < .01$ ). The mean score of male students for Environmental Attitude was 56.28 and that of female students was 58.56. It was also observed that the mean was higher for females which indicated that females have more favourable Environmental Attitude than male students. A significant gender difference was also found in the Green Consumer Behaviour of undergraduate students ( $t = 3.650$ ,  $**p < .01$ ). The mean score of male students for Environmental Attitude was 60.65 and that of female students was 63.47. It was evident that the mean was higher for females which indicated that Green Consumer behaviour was predominant in females. The researchers further presume that the gender differences in Environmental Attitude and green Consumer Behaviour might be owing to the differences in the socialisation process taking place between males and females.

### IV. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study are at par with the findings of studies on gender differences in Attitude and Behaviours conducted earlier by other researchers. Keum (2013) examined that environmental attitude significantly influenced green consumer behaviour of undergraduate students. In another study Zelezny *et al.* (2000) observed that females have more favourable environmental attitudes when compared to males. Apart from this, Stevenson *et al.* (2003) also observed that females have more positive attitude towards the environment when compared to males. The main reason for gender differences as reflected by the researchers is the differences in socialisation of males and females.

Researchers Zelezny & Bailey (2006) have also observed gender difference in green behaviour as attributing the differences in socialisation of the two genders. Dagher, Itani & Kassar (2015) found that the influence of environmental attitude on green purchase behaviour was stronger in females than in males. This observation is in line with the present study that females tend to show more predominant green behaviours and the researcher infers that this might be due to the differences in the socialisation process that takes place between the two genders. In most cases, females tend to show personality traits such as concern, warmth, attachment, compassion and emotions (Williams & Best, 1990b). The findings also affirm that females have more favourable environmental attitude.

The present study reiterates the vital need for education that fosters favourable environmental dispositions like environmental attitude which has a vast potential to induce green consumer behaviour among college students who constitute the present and potential consumers of the society. The study provides insights to the educational planners, policy makers, administrators, educators and marketers on the environmental attitude and green consumer behaviour of students to develop frameworks for redefining and refining education oriented towards fostering green consumer behaviour and environmental citizenship. Effective education that fosters environmentally friendly knowledge and dispositions along with the adequate skills is the need of the hour. This should be taken as a vital concern especially in the state of Kerala. This would essentially transform young citizens in to environmentally friendly or green consumers who strive towards building sustainable communities.

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