



# How Ecologically Conscious are Millennials? A Study of Young Consumers

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## ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades, the millennial generation have become a major segment in green marketing and have been identified for their pro-environmental attitudes. The current study explores the influencers (socialization agents) impacting the ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB) of the millennials using the consumer socialization framework. For this purpose the impact of socio-structural variables (age, gender, education and family income), socialization agents (family and peers) and perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) on environmental concern (EC) and ECCB has been studied in the Indian context. A sample of 325 millennials from a premier B-school was investigated through survey research method. Regression and mediation analyses, using PROCESS v 3.2, was administered to arrive at the results. Regression analysis confirmed the positive impact of perceived consumer effectiveness on ECCB. It also established the influence of socialization agents on environmental concern and ECCB of millennials. Further, mediation analyses revealed that, environmental concern mediated the relationship between family as a socialization agent and ECCB, while for peers it did not. In addition, environmental concern was established as a mediator between PCE and ECCB. The study confines itself to a sample of millennials from B-school background, and hence, may not be representative of the entire millennial generation. Among the socialization agents, the current study only considers family and peers in its framework, and remains silent on the evolving role of social media as an influencer. The findings have significant implications for both academicians and practitioners by highlighting the importance of social networks such as family and peers as channels of communication for effective implementation of marketers' strategies. The current study contributes to the limited literature on millennials green buying behavior in the emerging market context. The applicability of the consumer socialization framework to collectivistic countries like India has been underexplored. Using this framework our study establishes the mediating role of environmental concern in the model. Further we have made an attempt to investigate the role of EC as a possible mediator between PCE and ECCB as it has been rarely explored.

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## 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, the ongoing degradation of the global environment, has necessitated the need for creating awareness and educating the consumers to be ecologically conscious while exercising their buying decisions and the need for green products. The last few decades have witnessed growth in terms of environmental awareness and concerns, especially in the developed economies (Franzen, 2003; Chen and Chai, 2010). Today green marketing has become a major segment in competitive business as consumers are increasingly placing greater value on sustainability. The millennial generation comprising of individuals born throughout the 1980's and early 2000 have become a sizeable market opportunity. Furthermore, millennials have been perceived to care about the environment. Besides possessing positive attitudes towards eco-friendly or green products, they also have the ability and willingness to pay more for environment friendly brands, products or services (Smith and Brower, 2012).

India is expected to have 410 million millennials by 2020 who will be spending \$330 billion. This is more than the total population of the USA and more than the existing millennial (400 million) present in China (Morgan Stanley Report, 2017). It is therefore not surprising that this category of consumers has been considered the Holy Grail for marketers globally. Millennials have been identified for exhibiting strong concern for the environment (Gaudelli, 2009).

Evidences from the developed countries have indicated that ecological consciousness on the part of the consumer plays a pivotal role in alleviating environmental problems (Milfont, 2012). Ever since, the market for environmentally friendly products has been on the rise with green consumerism gaining

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increasing popularity. It is a well-documented fact that young consumers are more open to innovative ideas and in comparison to various consumer groups, these young consumers have demonstrated more spending power than their previous generations for green products (Hume, 2010). As part of their competitive strategy firms today are increasingly using eco-friendly brands to distinguish themselves from their contenders and to showcase their commitment towards safeguarding their environment. While extant research has been conducted on unraveling the pro-environment behavior of consumers in the western worlds (Chan, 2001; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008), research on the same among buyers in emerging markets has been inadequate.

Researchers have noted that while consumer concern for the environment has increased over the last decade; consumer perception is that the responsibility of protecting the environment lies with the government (Lai, 2000). It is therefore important to uncover the underlying environment-friendly attitudes which can provide help to marketers and practitioners alike. Various studies have identified several factors such as eco-labels, price and trust, along with psychological factors to be important influencers of ecological behavior. This behavior is also known to be deep rooted in one's personal and social values. In countries having collectivistic cultures such as India interpersonal networks and other social norms play a vital role in molding the consumers green attitudes (Borin et al., 2011). There is limited information available about how vulnerable the Indian consumers' are to the influence of interpersonal networks or socializing agents on their ecologically conscious consumer behavior. It is therefore pertinent to examine how susceptible millennials are to the influence of their social networks.

The current study uses the theory of consumer socialization as a theoretical framework to unravel the factors influencing the attitudes and behavior of green consumer behavior of Indian millennials. Since the consumer socialization process varies significantly across the lifetime of a person (Singh et al., 2006), it is imperative to investigate the impact of demographic variables (such as age, gender, education and family income) and the role played by socialization agents namely peers and family on environmental attitudes that influence millennials green purchasing behavior. An investigation of socialization in the emerging economies of Asia is relatively inadequate. An in-depth study of the social factors influencing the consumption behavior of millennials in India will provide a thorough understanding covering both the economic aspects of the green market as well as their environmental benefits.

The variations in the cultural and social aspects across countries have been widely acknowledged. Every country has been distinct in its knowledge, attitudes and skills based on the cultural framework prevailing along with varied information sources (Choi and La Ferli, 2004). The socialization agents like peers and family are known to operate differently across countries and it is important for the environmentalists and green marketers to be aware of these cultural shifts. Limited studies have inquired the consumer socialization framework among millennials belonging to the Asian emerging markets. Our study attempts to bridge this gap.

Against the aforesaid background, the focus of the study is to examine the applicability of theory of socialization, in defining the ecologically conscious consumer behavior. For this demographic variables (gender, age, family income and education), socialization agents (peers and family); beliefs (perceived consumer effectiveness); and attitudes (environmental concern) have been considered, which act as antecedents to ecologically conscious consumer behavior. Alongside, this research also focuses in examining the behavioral aspects of green buying behavior in the Indian context and tests "attitude-intention-behavior" model (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) to examine whether beliefs (PCE) has influence on consumer attitudes (EC) and whether these attitudes translate into behavior (ECCB). The study also tests the much validated scale of Straughan and Roberts (1999) in the Indian context. Its reliability has been highly tested in case of other countries (do Paco et al., 2014). The intent of studying such social factors will help provide deep insights not only into consumer behavior patterns of Indian millennials, but also help formulate marketing strategies.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 The theory of consumer socialization**

The current study adopts the framework of the theory of consumer socialization to gain insights into how the millennials acquire knowledge and attitudes towards "green" consumerism through interpersonal social networks. Green consumerism revolves around the production, advertisement and consumption of goods and services that possess pro- environment attributes (Akenji, 2014). As per the theory consumer socialization, social agents such as family, peers and mass media are known to be significant influencers in determining the attitude, behavior and purchase of green products by young consumers. Generally, green products are perceived to be high in price, low in quality and ambiguous in product information with respect to eco-friendliness of the product (Smith, 2010; Smith and Brower, 2012). Socialization agents such as peers and family may help in overcoming these obstacles (Muralidharan and Xue, 2016). Parents significantly influence the shaping of a young consumer's beliefs and attitudes towards brands and their consumption patterns (Shim and Koh, 1997) till they reach adolescence, post which, peers and media take over as the preferred source of influence (Singh et al., 2006). Conforming to the theory of consumer socialization, variables have been examined to observe how ecologically conscious are the millennials in their buying

behavior (Muralidharan et al., 2016). These include demographic variables, social agents and attitudes such as environmental concern, which manifests into ecologically conscious consumer behavior as the ultimate outcome.

## **2.2 Millennials**

A generation is described as a group of people that have shared age, significant life events and critical development stages. Millennial, is the generation born between the years 1981 – 2000 (Agarwal and Gupta, 2018). Millennials fall between the age of 18 to 34 years of age according to US census 2015.

## **2.3 Social-structural variables**

These include demographic variables such as gender, age, family size and race which provides the social framework in which interaction between individuals and social agents take place (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). The current study considers four variables relevant to the millennials namely age, gender, income and education.

Various research studies confirm that education and age have limited impact on environmental concern and eco-friendly purchasing behavior (Chan, 2000; Gamba and Oskamp, 1994; Singh and Verma, 2017). However, the behavior of the variables has varied across countries. In India, age had a negative influence on environmental attitudes and behavior while education had positive impact on buying behavior (Nittala, 2014). On the contrary in China both age and education had a positive impact on consumers' environmental concern (Shen and Saijo, 2008). When it came to gender women have been found to have more environmental concern than men (Fransson and Garling, 1999). In the context of Asian countries such as India and China women were found to have more promising environmental attitudes and behavior than their male counterparts. (Jain and Kaur, 2006; Lee, 2009). Because of the conflicting findings, the current study explores the impact of socio-cultural variables on the eco-friendly purchasing behavior of Indian millennials. Demographic information such as age, gender, education qualification and income were considered, to define the social setting of the millennials. Hence, we hypothesize,

**H1.** Demographic variables (age, gender, education qualification, family income) impact the ecologically conscious consumer behavior of millennials.

## **2.4 Ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB)**

Environmental consciousness may be defined to be the extent to which a firm produces a good conducive to the environment while negating the adverse impact on the eco system (Kotchen and Reiling, 2000; Borin et al., 2011). It has been observed that consumers' awareness about eco-friendly products impacts their concern for the environment through an increased involvement with eco-friendly products. ECCB as a construct maybe defined as a pro-environment behavior and a necessary pre-requisite for solving environmental problems (Roberts and Bacon, 1997). The increasing attention to environmental problems has necessitated the need to understand ECCB which may operationally be defined as the usage of recycled paper products, energy conservation by driving as little as possible, consumer purchased decisions and conservation of electricity (Roberts and Bacon, 1997). The current study considers this construct as a dependent variable and examines the impact of socialization agents, EC and PCE in influencing ECCB.

## **2.5 Socialization agents**

Socialization agents include parents, peers, and media advertising. Many researchers have attempted to examine the impact of these agents on the buying intent for eco-friendly products. It has been observed that the perceptions surrounding green products are that they are highly priced, are low in quality and value and the presence of ambiguity when it came to product information and the explanation of how the product could help the environment (Smith, 2010; Smith and Brower, 2012). In the presence of caveats socialization agents can play a very influential role in bridging these gaps especially in a collectivistic society like India, where group welfare and group hierarchy are of paramount importance. This highlights the need to understand the role and effect of socialization of parents and peers on attitude and behavior (Hsieh et al., 2006; Shim and Koh, 1997). Significant research has confirmed the influential parental role on young consumers, brand attitude and consumption behavior especially till the individual reaches adolescence. After which it has been observed that peers and media play an important role and become the preferred sources for consumption and information about green purchases. In the Asian context it has been noticed that parental influence can extend to young adulthood in influencing buying decisions. Given their dominant influence familial communication about eco-friendly consumerism is expected to play a critical role in the determination of green buying behavior. As young consumers transcend into adulthood, the impact of peers comprising of friends, classmates and colleagues increases in deciding the consumption decisions in America (Singh et al., 2006).

Muralidharan et al., 2016 in his study found that millennials preferred word-of-mouth over mass media in impacting the environment friendly attitudes and purchasing behavior of Indian and American millennials. The current study attempts to examine the influential impact of family and peers on the green

buying behavior among Indian millennials. Socialization agents are regarded as sources of information conveying knowledge related to consumption and habits that are formed by emulating others (Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel, 1989). The agents were confined to the influential role played by family and peers respectively, and the role of mass media was not considered. Thus we hypothesize,

**H2 (a).** Family as a socialization agent significantly impacts ECCB.

**H2 (b).** Peer as a socialization agent significantly impacts ECCB.

## **2.6 Environmental concern (EC)**

Environmental concern is an attitude pertaining to an individual's behavior with consequences for the eco-system (Fransson and Garling, 1999). It is a well-documented fact that environmental concern distinctly predicts consumers' environmental conscious behavior (Chan, 1996).

Environmental Concern can be explained as an "evaluation of, or an attitude towards the realization that one's own behavior, or other's behavior has consequences for the environment" (Fransson and Garling, 1999). Scholars in the past have described attitudes as a precursor of behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and various researchers have validated this relationship and have found environmental concern to be a substantial predictor of pro- environmental behavior (Roberts 1996; Mainieri et al., 1997) which results in intention for purchasing green products. Given the economic constraints and societal pressures, it has been observed that the effect of environmental concern on an individual's behavior becomes conditional (Fransson and Garling, 1999) which can come in the way of socially responsible behavior (Hines et al., 1987). The current study expects environmental concern to positively impact the ecologically conscious consumer behavior among Indian millennials. Thus, we propose,

**H3.** Environmental concern positively impacts the ecologically conscious consumer behavior.

## **2.7 Environmental concern as a mediator between socialization agents and ECCB**

Previous studies have categorically demonstrated the presence of associations between socio demographic and psychological factors with environmental factors and environmental concern (Van Liere and Dunlap, 1980; Hines et al., 1987). However, the mediating role of environmental concern in the process of consumer socialization has been under explored (De Gregorio and Sung, 2010). It is pertinent to note the difference in the perception of environmental concern in emerging economies as compared to the rest. It has been observed that in collectivistic cultures such as India, the "Green Consumer Socialization process of young millennials is influenced by family and peers as they acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes required to function and sustain at the market place. However it has been observed that the effect of environmental concern on buying intentions of eco-friendly products were conditional only when there were no costs accompanied due to changing current lifestyles (Laroche et al., 2002). Also factors such as the price, the brand under consideration, and availability of green products have been known to hinder attitudes impact on eco-friendly buying behavior (Jones et al., 2008).

Past Studies in environmental research have proved that consumers from collectivistic societies are more ecologically conscious with stronger levels of commitment than those from individualistic cultures. The current study attempts to examine whether environmental concern plays a mediating role on the ecologically conscious consumer behavior of Indian millennials. Hence, we propose,

**H4.** Environmental concern mediates the impact of family as a socialization agent on ecologically conscious consumer behavior among millennials.

**H5.** Environmental concern mediates the impact of peer as a socialization agent on ecologically conscious consumer behavior among millennials.

## **2.8 Perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE)**

In extant literature PCE has been considered as an element of one's attitude and has been demonstrated as an important predictor of ECCB (Antil, 1984). However most recent studies have considered attitudes and PCE to be two distinct constructs and classified as a psychographic variable (Ellen and Cobb Walgren, 1991). Increasingly majority of researchers today explain attitude as a valuation of a problem (Tesser and Shaffer, 1990) and PCE has been conceived the manner in which personal consumption activity brings about solution to the problem.

PCE may be construed as an individual's belief that she/ he can make an impactful contribution in resolving environmental issues (Kinnear et al., 1974; Taufique and Vaithianathan, 2018). In ecological consumer research, PCE has been inferred as internal behavioral control which can contribute significantly in environmental protection (Shamdasani et al., 1993). Straughan and Roberts (1999) observed PCE to be the single best predictor of their ecological conscious consumer behavior. They believed that consumers will purchase environmentally friendly products subject to the belief, that, their behavior will illicit an affirmative impact on protecting the eco-system. It has been observed that people with high PCE results in high purchase intention for green products. In the Asian Context too Kim (2011) has validated PCE to be an important predictor of green purchase behavior. Roberts (1996) found PCE to surpass all other demographic and psychographic correlates as the single strongest predictor of ECCB. Thus, we hypothesize,

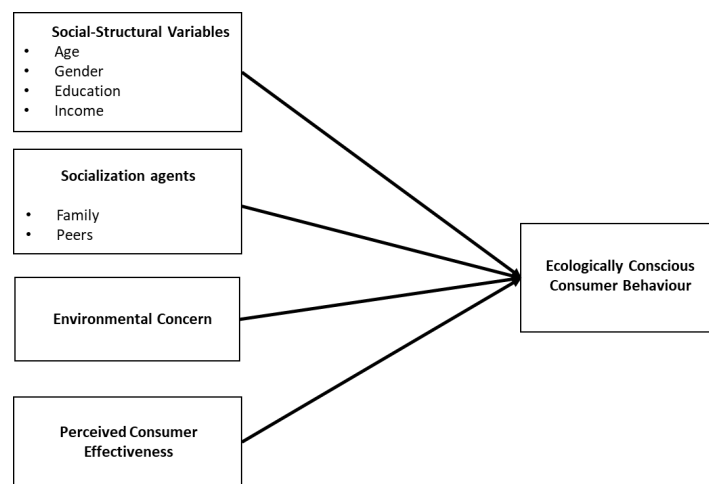
**H6.** Perceived consumer effectiveness will impact ecologically conscious consumer behavior among millennials.

Further, the current study attempted to test the theory of planned behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) to examine whether beliefs (PCE) have influence on consumer attitudes (EC) and whether these attitudes translate into behavior (ECCB). Thus, we posit,

**H7.** Environmental concern mediates the impact of perceived consumer effectiveness on ecologically conscious consumer behavior among millennials.

Though previous researchers have explored impact of various antecedents on ECCB, barely researchers have investigated impact of PCE on ECCB via environmental concern.

To the best of our knowledge, rarely studies have explored the role of environmental concern as a mediator between socialization agents and ECCB in the Indian context. In addition, we believe limited studies have examined the impact of perceived consumer effectiveness on ECCB in studies conducted across India. Thus, our paper attempts to investigate the dynamic interplay of the aforementioned variables and suggest possible implications for academicians and practitioners. Figure 1 displays the antecedents of ECCB for our study.



**Figure 1. Antecedents of Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior**

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Sample

The current study is in the Indian context. Since the focus of our study was millennials, an online structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents between the age of 18-35 years of age. A convenient sample of total of 325 responses was collected from the B-school population. The sample comprised of 69% male and 31% female. 72% of the sample was between the age group of 21-25 years. 87% were currently pursuing post-graduation. 66% of the population was in the income group of up to 10 Lakhs per annum, 23% upto 20 Lakhs per annum; and 11% above 20 Lakhs per annum.

#### 3.2 Instruments used

The questionnaire constructed had items from ECCB, environmental concern (EC), perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), family socialization and peer socialization, and all measured on a 5 point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

*Ecologically conscious consumer behavior* - The ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB) construct was measured by adapting the validated scale of Straughan and Roberts (1999). The items focused only on energy efficiency, polluting and/or recycled products. Hence only 19 out of 24 items were used. Researchers in the past have also used and tested part of the Straughan and Roberts (1999) scale (Paço et al. 2013, 2014, 2018). Example of an item used is, "I have purchased products because they cause less pollution."

*Environmental concern* - The scale of environmental concern, comprising of 10 items was taken from Roberts and Bacon (1997); sample item includes, "mankind is severely abusing the environment."

*Perceived consumer effectiveness* - Perceived consumer effectiveness was measured by using Straughan and Roberts (1999) scale. Sample item includes "It is worthless for the individual consumer to do anything about pollution."

*Family and peer socialization* - The scales consisting of 7 items each, were measured using Lueg and Finney (2007). Sample items for family and peers used were "I talk with my family about green products and services" and "I talk with my peers about green products and services".

*Socio-structural variables* - In demographics age, gender, education qualification and family income was asked.

### 3.3 Measurement model

Cronbach's alpha indicator was used as a reference to establish the values of all the constructs. The values were 0.89 for ECCB, 0.78 for EC, 0.66 for PCE, 0.95 for family socialization and 0.93 for peer socialization respectively. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using AMOS 21, to evaluate factor loadings of the variables. One item was dropped from the construct of PCE due to poor factor loading. Other coefficients were found to be different from zero and the loadings observed of the variables were high in all the cases, indicating that the latent variables adequately explained the behavior of the observed variables.

### 4. Results

T-test and ANNOVA was conducted for determining the impact of socio-structural variables on ECCB. T-test showed that gender has no impact on ECCB. ANNOVA analyses revealed that age and education qualification proved to be significant predictors of ECCB. Thus H1 was partially supported. Interestingly when we look at age, older millennials (above the age of 30) have a significantly higher impact (mean = 3.96, SD = 0.58) on ECCB than younger millennials (>20 years - mean = 3.18, SD = 0.48; 21-25 years - mean = 3.52, SD = 0.56; 26-30 years - mean = 3.61, SD = 0.65).

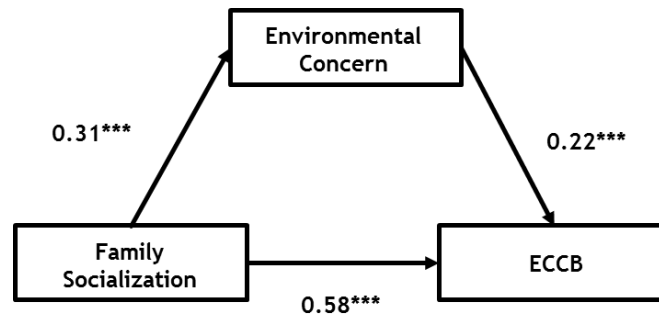
In case of education qualification, millennials who have complete post-graduation (mean = 3.78, SD = 0.64) have a higher and significant effect on ECCB as compared to millennials pursuing post-graduation (mean = 3.51, SD = 0.57). However in case of family income, there was no significant effect on ECCB.

Further, correlation and regression analyses was conducted using SPSS version 24.0, wherein family socialization, peer socialization, PCE, and EC were the independent variables and ECCB was the dependent variable. Table 1 shows the regression values of the same. It can be observed that family and peer socialization significantly influences EC, hence H2 (a and b) is supported. EC (H3) and PCE (H6) also significantly impact ECCB. Thus validating our hypotheses H3 and H6.

**Table 1. Regression coefficients between IV and DV**

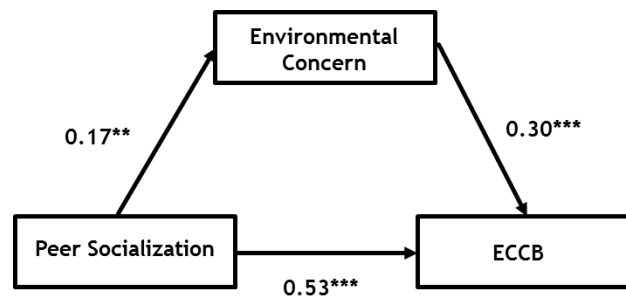
Independent variable	Dependent variable	$\beta$	t	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Family Socialization	Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior	.46***	15.17	230.1***	0.42
Peer Socialization	Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior	.43***	12.86	165.31***	0.34
Environment Concern	Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior	.36***	7.71	59.39***	0.39
Family Socialization	Environment Concern	.24***	5.76	33.13***	0.09
Peer Socialization	Environment Concern	.14**	3.16	9.98**	0.03
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior	.16***	4.53	20.54***	0.06
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	Environment Concern	.45***	14.33	205.41***	0.39

We studied the environmental concern as a possible mediator, mediating the relationship between socialization agents (family and peers) and ECCB using PROCESS v.3.2. SPSS application put forth by Hayes (2013). The direct effect of family socialization on ECCB was  $\beta = 0.58$  and significant, whereas the direct effect of environmental concern on ECCB was  $\beta = 0.22$ . However, the indirect effect of family socialization on ECCB was  $\beta = 0.07$  (upper limit (.1046) lower limit (.0342)). Since the range does not include zero it is significant. However, as the direct effect of family socialization on ECCB is also significant, this indicates partial mediation. Hence H4 is confirmed. Please see figure 2 for the depiction.



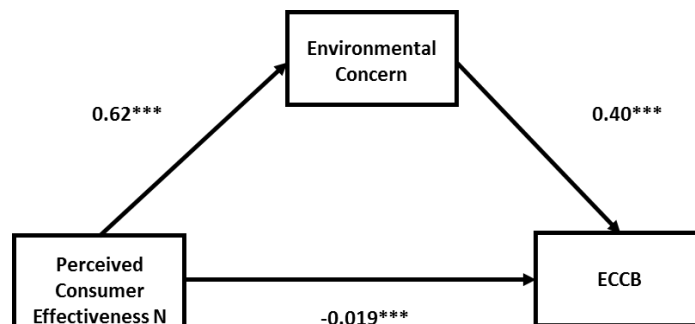
**Figure 2. EC as a mediator between family socialization and ECCB**

Similarly, when we investigated the impact of peer socialization, the direct effect on ECCB was  $\beta = 0.53$  and significant, while the direct effect of environmental concern on ECCB was  $\beta = 0.30$ . However, as seen in figure 3, the indirect effect of peer socialization on ECCB was  $\beta = 0.05$  (upper limit (.0912) lower limit (.0187)). Since the range does not include zero it is significant. However, as the direct effect of peer socialization on ECCB is also significant, this indicates partial mediation. Thus, H5 is supported.



**Figure 3. EC as a mediator between peer socialization and ECCB**

Further, when we investigated the impact of PCE, it is observed in figure 4, the direct effect on ECCB was  $\beta = -0.019$  and insignificant, while the direct effect of environmental concern on ECCB was  $\beta = 0.40$  and significant. The indirect effect of peer socialization on ECCB was  $\beta = 0.25$  (upper limit (.3495) lower limit (.1528)), and since the range does not include zero it is significant. As the direct impact of PCE on ECCB is insignificant but the indirect effect is significant, it indicates full mediation. Thus, H7 is supported.



**Figure 4. EC as a mediator between Perceived consumer effectiveness and ECCB**

## 5. Conclusions

Over the last few decades millennials are being increasingly targeted by marketers as potential consumers of green products. This paper attempted to study the factors that can encourage millennials to showcase their ecologically conscious consumer behavior. The study makes use of the consumer socialization theoretical framework to examine whether social structural variables and socialization agents affect environmental attitudes translating to ecologically conscious behavior.

While the theory of consumer socialization has widely been applied to the millennials in the developed countries, the relevance of this theory in the context of an emerging market like India has been subject to limited investigation.

The study's findings make valuable theoretical contribution by highlighting the significant influence of families on buying behavior of millennials in collectivist societies prevalent in Asian countries like India.

In the Indian setting gender and family income had no impact in raising environmental concern resulting in the purchase of eco-friendly products. This result is consistent with the findings of previous research (Chan, 2000; Chan 1996). A plausible explanation that may support our findings could be the growing exposure of the general public to the environmental problems plaguing our planet (Liere and Dunlap, 1980). This may in turn be responsible for reducing the predictive power of gender and income on millennials (Roberts, 1996). Since, also a majority of our sample comprised of younger millennials who are not financially independent, income as a variable is rendered insignificant.

However the demographic variable, age, was significant in determining ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB). Interestingly, the older millennials (above 30 years of age) in our sample, were seen to be more proactive in demonstrating green buying behavior in comparison to younger millennials who were in their 20s. Further, in the context of educational qualification, millennials with high education (post-graduate) were more receptive to environment friendly buying behavior in comparison to those who were pursuing post-graduation. It is plausible that the older millennials, both in terms of age and qualification, are more aware and responsible for the need to adhere to green buying behavior.

The primary finding with respect to socialization agents has been their critical influence on ecologically conscious consumer behavior. This outcome is in tune with previous research; as it has been found that family plays a significant role as influencers as individuals embark on their way to adulthood (Singh et al., 2006). Researchers have increasingly observed that despite rapid economic development and rise in purchasing power India still values its collectivist traits highlighting the relevance of personal social networks (Muralidharan and Xue, 2016).

The study further establishes the direct impact of environmental concern on ecologically conscious consumer behavior thereby establishing that environmental attitudes are significant precursors to eco-friendly buying behavior. More prominently mediation analysis displayed that family socialization had an indirect effect on green buying behavior of millennials through environmental concern. The mediating impact of environmental concern strongly enhances the study's relevance as it establishes the pathway to ecologically conscious consumer behavior. Extant literature identifies PCE as the most important correlate of ECCB. Our study too, resonates with this result (Roberts, 1996).

### **5.1 Theoretical implications**

The study targeted the millennials from an emerging economy like India. Studies on emerging markets have been subject to limited investigation and the current research contributes significantly to its evolving literature. The findings highlight certain important theoretical contributions such as, the important role played by family and peers in a collectivistic society like India. Environmental concern was found to have a direct impact on buying behavior, thereby confirming, that socialization agents are antecedents to ECCB. The mediation analysis revealed indirect effect of family and peer socialization on buying behavior via environmental concern. Researchers can further deliberate whether mass media shifts the dynamics of family influence. Further, our study also contributes to the literature on perceived consumer effectiveness. It does have a critical impact on ECCB via environmental concern, for the millennials. Limited studies have examined PCE, that too in the Indian context. Additional empirical work can strengthen the establishment of its role in affecting green buying behavior of Indian millennials.

### **5.2 Managerial implications**

The findings of the current study have implications for both academicians and marketers alike. It has been typically observed that in the Indian scenario environmental knowledge and education is of low quality, and therefore fails to successfully resolve environmental problems (Sonowal, 2009). It is thus imperative that we form favourable attitudes and provide the necessary quality education. To address this concern green marketers may be encouraged to use interpersonal networks to include peers and family among their consumers in engaging them with group educational efforts in an attempt to enhance environmental concern, which may further result in ecologically conscious consumer behavior.

Subsequent to our findings on the behavior of the demographic variables, it is suggested that marketers focus more on millennials older in age and higher in education as their target group. In addition, marketers may run awareness campaigns to educate the young consumers.

Perceived consumer effectiveness has been found to exert a significant influence, therefore, marketers may strengthen consumers' beliefs by an inclusion of substantial claims in their messages (example, product benefits involving the consumer and the environment, or by using positive affirmations from both actual consumers and opinion leaders who help the environment by using the product).

Also millennials tend to think rationally and therefore, an encouragement is required from the marketers towards a green purchasing behavior. Green marketers should organize campaigns to educate young consumers about the growing benefits of conscious buying behavior. Such endeavours have been found to be successful in influencing eco-friendly buying behavior.

For a country like India, given the influential role played by family in affecting the attitude and behavior of the millennials, marketers must focus at targeting interpersonal networks for their green marketing campaigns.

### 5.3 Limitations and future directions for research

The study confines itself to a sample of millennials from B-school background, and hence, may not be representative of the entire millennial generation. Among the socialization agents, the current study only considers family and peers in its framework, and remains silent on the evolving role of social media as an influencer. This aspect may be considered for future research. The construct of perceived consumer effectiveness may be further investigated both in the Indian context and other emerging markets. Also, a longitudinal study of millennials can possibly be conducted to consolidate and validate findings over a period of time across diverse cohorts. There Future research could also focus on exploring the impact of the socialization process among millennials in a cross-cultural setting to study the influence of cultural shifts on ecologically conscious consumer behavior.

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