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Exploring Sustainable Consumer Behavior: A TPB-Based Study On Second-Hand Purchase Intentions

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KEYWORDS

Normative Influences, Perceived Behavioral Control, Purchase Intention, Perceived Norms, Sustainable Consumption, Subjective Norms, Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

ABSTRACT

As the Earth's natural resources face rapid depletion, promoting sustainable consumer behaviors has become crucial. One such behavior is adopting second-hand products, which aligns with circular economy principles. This study investigates the factors influencing consumers' intentions to purchase used products and visit second-hand shops, utilizing an extended Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework. Specifically, it examines the impact of independent variables-attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and perceived norms—on purchase intention, a mediating variable, and the ultimate dependent variable, the intention to visit second-hand shops.

The study employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze these relationships, offering nuanced insights into each variable's mediation effects and significance. Results reveal that perceived norms and subjective norms exhibit partial mediation effects. Interestingly, while subjective and perceived norms significantly influence purchase intention, attitude, and perceived behavioral control are not significant predictors in this model. These findings highlight the pivotal role of normative influences in shaping consumer behavior toward second-hand markets. This research contributes to the literature on sustainable consumption by providing a comprehensive analysis of consumer decision-making in second-hand shopping, with implications for policymakers and marketers aiming to foster eco-conscious consumption patterns.

1. INTRODUCTION

The exponential degradation of the environment and shortage of resources have led the consumer to reconsider his purchase choices. The primary cause of these changes and the obstacle to sustainability is the rising use of energy, goods, and services (Fischer, 2017 & Khoshnevis Yazd, 2019). Short-lived styles and rapid fashion changes have produced a disposable trend that leads to an adverse effect on the environment. The amount of solid trash is continuously increasing. (Liang, J, 2018) Secondhand purchasing has emerged as one of the most significant behaviors to reduce waste and conserve resources. Second-hand purchasing aligns with the principles of the circular economy by reducing waste, reusing products, and minimizing environmental impact (Kirchherr et al., 2017). Encouraging such behavior can significantly contribute to achieving global sustainability goals. Second-hand purchases contribute to the circular economy by extending the lifecycle

of products, reducing the need for new production, and promoting more environmentally responsible consumption patterns (Kaur, Ashneet, et al, 2024)..

The concept of socially responsible consumers has gained popularity in the recent past. Many previous literature reviews have highlighted the change in the behavior of the consumer to ethical and responsible purchasing. (Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius 2008; Kim, Lee, and Hur 2012; Manget, Roche, and Munnich 2009). Fostering this practice requires an understanding of what drives consumers to purchase used items. Ajzen (1991) developed the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which offers a strong framework for analyzing customer intentions. According to TPB, three main factors—attitudes, subjective standards, and perceived behavioral control—have an impact on behavioral intentions. Taking into account other variables including perceived value, environmental concern, and trust in second-hand marketplaces, this study uses TPB to investigate the factors that influence second-hand purchase intentions.

This paper aims to uncover the psychological and social determinants of sustainable consumer behavior in the context of second-hand purchases. By understanding these motivations, businesses and policymakers can develop targeted strategies to encourage sustainable consumption and support a circular economy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A circular economy and the accomplishment of environmental conservation objectives depend on sustainable consumer behavior. Sustainable consumption, according to Peattie and Peattie (2009), entails meeting customer requirements while reducing the negative effects on the environment. Because it minimizes waste and promotes resource optimization, second-hand shopping is a successful, sustainable activity (Belk, 2014). This research paper has been adapted for the theory of planned behavior, which is one of the prominent theories to understand the concept of attitude building vis a vis sustainability. Chen and Hung (2016) applied TPB to study online second-hand market behavior, emphasizing the role of trust and perceived behavioral control.

2.1 Variables of the Study

Attitude

Consumers' positive evaluations of second-hand purchases influence their intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Mindful consumers who are concerned about the environment spend more on second-hand clothes. (Brousik, B 2021). High environmental awareness correlates with a greater likelihood of sustainable behaviors, including second-hand buying (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2008 & Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Growing sales of thrift stores in various countries show the change in consumers' mindset for second-hand products. Chen and Tung (2014) discovered that intentions to make green purchases were strongly predicted by views toward eco-friendly products.

Subjective Norms

Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This construct captures the influence of friends, family, and societal expectations on an individual's decision-making process. Subjective norms have been found to influence purchase intentions indirectly through social conformity. For instance, Armitage and Conner (2001) highlighted that subjective norms are particularly significant in collectivist cultures, where social approval heavily impacts decision-making. In a study on sustainable fashion, Kang et al. (2013) showed that subjective norms significantly influenced consumers' intentions to purchase eco-friendly apparel. Social pressure or encouragement from peers can shape purchase intentions (Chung & Monroe, 2003).

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform a behavior, considering internal (e.g., skills) and external (e.g., resources) factors (Ajzen, 1991). It is the ease or difficulty of buying second-hand products, influenced by availability and accessibility, that affects behavior (Taylor & Todd, 1995). Higher levels of perceived behavioral control led to stronger purchase intentions. Taylor and Todd (1995) found that PBC was critical in predicting technology adoption intentions. Similarly, Hsu et al. (2017) demonstrated that PBC significantly influenced intentions to engage in online second-hand shopping, as consumers perceived greater ease and convenience in such purchases.

Perceived Norms

Perceived norms extend the concept of subjective norms by encompassing both descriptive norms (perceptions of what others do) and injunctive norms (perceptions of what others approve or disapprove of) (Cialdini et al., 1990). Perceived norms have been shown to significantly influence behavioral intentions, particularly in behaviors involving environmental or social responsibility. Goldstein et al. (2008) found that descriptive norms had a strong effect on hotel guests' intentions to reuse towels, demonstrating the power of perceived peer behavior.

Numerous studies have shown that purchase intention is a direct antecedent of visit intentions. For example, Jalilvand et al. (2012) demonstrated that purchase intention mediated the relationship between attitudes toward online reviews and intentions

to visit a hotel. Similarly, Su and Huang (2018) found that purchase intention strongly predicted tourists' decisions to visit heritage sites.

2.2 Gaps in Literature

This study holds significance as it addresses critical gaps in understanding consumer behavior within second-hand markets, a growing yet underexplored area in sustainable consumption research. While prior studies focus on attitudes and perceived behavioral control, this research emphasizes the pivotal role of perceived norms and subjective norms, revealing their partial mediation effects. Additionally, it challenges conventional behavioral models by finding attitude and perceived control to be insignificant predictors, warranting further investigation. The study bridges the gap in the literature by offering a nuanced analysis using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling using the latest software of PLS-SEM 4, providing actionable insights for policymakers and marketers aiming to foster eco-conscious behaviors in diverse consumer segments.

2.3 Research Objective

Based on the extensive literature review undertaken for the current study and identifying the research gap, the following objectives have been laid:

1. To investigate the mediating effects of perceived and subjective norms on consumer purchase intentions in second-hand markets using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).
2. To analyze the significance of attitude and perceived behavioral control as predictors of purchase intentions and explore their role within the behavioral model applied to sustainable consumption.
3. To provide insights for policymakers and marketers by examining how normative influences shape consumer decision-making to promote eco-conscious behaviors and sustainable consumption patterns in second-hand markets.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the role of perceived norms, subjective norms, attitude, and perceived behavioral control in shaping consumer purchase intentions within second-hand markets in the Indian context. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is the primary analytical technique to test the hypothesized relationships and mediation effects between the dependent and the independent variables.

3.1. Research Design

A survey-based approach was adopted to collect data from consumers mostly between 20 and 35 years of age who were actively engaged in second-hand shopping. This design allows for a snapshot view of the behavioral influences at a specific point in time.

3.2. Sampling

The target population, mostly aged between 20 and 35 years of age, consists of individuals familiar with or actively participating in second-hand markets, including online platforms and physical stores. A purposive sampling method was employed to ensure respondents had relevant experience. The sample size of 350 respondents was finally analyzed after preliminary scrutiny, which was deliberately determined using the ten-times rule for PLS-SEM, consisting of at least ten times the largest number of structural paths pointing to a construct in the model. This resulted in a final sample of 350 respondents, ensuring adequate statistical power and reliability.

3.3. Data Collection

Data was gathered through an online questionnaire designed using validated scales adapted from the theory of planned behavior and the norm activation model approach to consumer behavior regarding organic menus by Yeon Ho Shin et al. 2018. The respondents answered by filling out the Google forms, which were circulated to reach out to a maximum number of respondents all across the country.

3.4. Analytical Approach

PLS-SEM was chosen due to its ability to handle complex models, small sample sizes, and non-normal data distributions with adjustment toward mediation analysis Kanishka, S et al., 2024. The reporting was conducted in two stages:

1. **Measurement Model Assessment**: Evaluated reliability, validity (convergent and discriminant), and factor loadings of constructs.
2. **Structural Model Assessment**: Tested hypotheses, path coefficients, and mediation effects. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was applied to assess significance levels.

3.5. Conceptual Framework

To study the impact of independent variables (Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavior Control, Perceived Norms) on the mediating variable (Purchase Intention) and the final dependent variable (Intention to Visit) using **Partial Least**

Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), we need to set up and analyze a model based on the relationships between these variables.

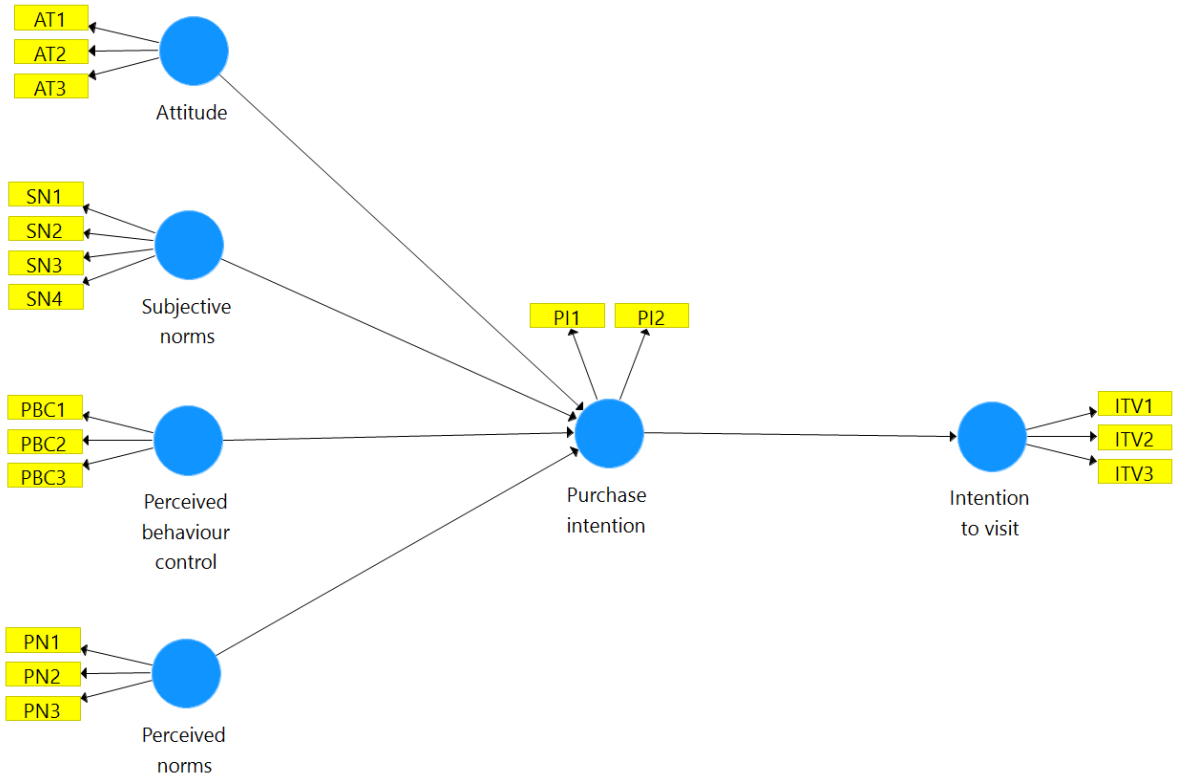

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Second-hand Purchase intention of the consumer

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This study investigates the factors influencing consumers' intentions to purchase used products and visit second-hand shops, utilizing an extended Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework. Specifically, it examines the impact of independent variables—attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and perceived norms—on purchase intention, a mediating variable, and the ultimate dependent variable, the intention to visit second-hand shops.

The reporting of the PLS path model consists of two distinct components: the reporting of the Reflective Measurement Model and the reporting of the Structural Model.

4.1. Reporting the Reflective Measurement Model

The extended model of TPB has six latent variables, which are measured on a reflective scale. These variables consist of four exogenous factors and two endogenous ones. The exogenous factors are Attitude, Subjective norms, Perceived behavioral control, and Perceived norms. The endogenous factors are Purchase intention and Intention to visit.

(i) Assessment of Construct Reliability and Validity

The measurement model was assessed using the extended TPB framework, focusing on the relationships among attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, perceived norms, purchase intention, and visiting second-hand shops. Convergent validity was established as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded the threshold of 0.50, confirming adequate shared variance among items. Internal consistency reliability was robust, with Composite Reliability (CR) values above 0.70 and Cronbach's alpha coefficients surpassing 0.70, indicating strong inter-item correlations and construct reliability across all measured variables as shown in Table 1. (Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Hair, J. F. (2017)).

Table 1: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Attitude	**0.841**	**0.904**	**0.758**
Intention to visit	**0.852**	**0.910**	**0.770**
Perceived behaviour control	**0.811**	**0.887**	**0.724**
Perceived norms	**0.793**	**0.879**	**0.708**
Purchase intention	**0.826**	**0.920**	**0.852**
Subjective norms	**0.829**	**0.888**	**0.667**

(ii) Assessment of Outer loadings

Outer loadings for the TPB framework variables—attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, perceived norms, and purchase intention—exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 as seen in Table 2, confirming indicator reliability and demonstrating strong associations between observed items and their respective constructs.

Table 2: Outer Loadings

	Attitude	Intention to visit	Perceived behaviour control	Perceived norms	Purchase intention	Subjective norms
AT1	**0.837**					
AT2	**0.899**					
AT3	**0.875**					
ITV1		**0.862**				
ITV2		**0.899**				
ITV3		**0.872**				
PBC1			**0.839**			
PBC2			**0.831**			
PBC3			**0.882**			
PI1					**0.924**	
PI2					**0.922**	
PN1				**0.865**		
PN2				**0.880**		
PN3				**0.775**		
SN1						**0.788**
SN2						**0.890**

SN3						**0.704**
SN4						**0.871**

(iii) Assessment of Discriminant Validity- Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs as per Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981), (Henseler et al 2015). This validates the distinctiveness of attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, perceived norms, and purchase intention as is evident from Table 3 below.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

	Attitude	**Intention to visit**	**Perceived behaviour control**	**Perceived norms**	**Purchase intention**	**Subjective norms**
Attitude	**0.871**					
Intention to visit	**0.625**	**0.878**				
Perceived behaviour control	**0.712**	**0.545**	**0.851**			
Perceived norms	**0.597**	**0.714**	**0.686**	**0.841**		
Purchase intention	**0.491**	**0.717**	**0.639**	**0.778**	**0.923**	
Subjective norms	**0.493**	**0.637**	**0.593**	**0.548**	**0.649**	**0.816**

4.2. Reporting the Structural Model:

The structural model was assessed to evaluate hypothesized relationships within the extended TPB framework using Path coefficients (β), R^2 (Explained Variance), Effect Size (f^2), and Predictive Relevance (Q^2) using a blindfolding procedure. Mediation analysis has been undertaken using variance accounted for (VAF) to assess the degree of mediation. Finally, bootstrapping results have been evaluated to highlight the significant influence of exogenous latent constructs on the endogenous latent constructs in the conceptual model as per Chin, W. W. (1998).

(i) Assessment of R Square

The R^2 values as shown in Table 4 indicate that the model explains 51.4% of the variance in the intention to visit second-hand shops and 68.3% of the variance in purchase intention, demonstrating substantial explanatory power. Adjusted R^2 values (0.511 and 0.675) confirm model robustness, accounting for predictor count and sample size effects.

Table 4: R Square

	R Square	**R Square Adjusted**
Intention to visit	0.514	0.511
Purchase intention	0.683	0.675

(ii) Assessment of F square

The f2 values indicate the effect size of latent constructs on endogenous variables. Perceived norms (0.512) significantly affect purchase intention, while subjective norms (0.172) show a moderate effect in Table 5. Attitude (0.014) and perceived behavioral control (0.019) exhibit negligible effects. Purchase intention (1.057) strongly influences the intention to visit, highlighting its substantial mediating role.

Table 5: F square

	Intention to visit	Purchase intention
Attitude		**0.014**
Perceived behavior control		**0.019**
Perceived norms		**0.512**
Purchase intention	**1.057**	
Subjective norms		**0.172**

	Attitude	Intention to visit	Perceived behaviour control	Perceived norms	Purchase intention
Attitude					**0.014**
Intention to visit					
Perceived behaviour control					**0.019**
Perceived norms					**0.512**
Purchase intention		**1.057**			
Subjective norms					**0.172**

(iii) Assessment of Inner VIF Values

The inner VIF values for purchase intention reveal no multicollinearity concerns, as all values remain below the critical threshold of 5 as depicted in Table 6 below. Attitude (2.135), perceived behavioral control (2.796), perceived norms (2.079), and subjective norms (1.648) exhibit acceptable collinearity levels, ensuring the predictors are independent and the structural model estimates are reliable and unbiased.

Table 6: Inner VIF Values

	Purchase intention
Attitude	**2.135**
Perceived behavior control	**2.796**
Perceived norms	**2.079**
Subjective norms	**1.648**

(iv) Blindfolding procedure using Q square

The blindfolding *Q*2 values assess predictive relevance for the endogenous variables (Hair et al 2015, Hair et al 2017). Purchase intention exhibits strong predictive relevance (Q2=0.560*Q*2=0.560), while the intention to visit shows moderate predictive relevance (Q2=0.387*Q*2=0.387) as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Q square

	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
Attitude	525.000	525.000	
Intention to visit	525.000	321.718	0.387
Perceived behavior control	525.000	525.000	

Perceived norms	525.000	525.000	
Purchase intention	350.000	153.970	0.560
Subjective norms	700.000	700.000	

(v) Mediation Analysis

To test mediation, the indirect effects of attitude (AT), subjective norms (SN), perceived behavioral control (PBC), and perceived norms (PN) on intention to visit (ITV) through purchase intention (PI) were analyzed. Significant mediation occurs when the indirect path IV→PI→ITV*IV→PI→ITV* is significant.

AT (p=0.216*p*=0.216) and PBC (p=0.158*p*=0.158) showed no significant indirect effects, indicating no mediation in Table 8 below. PN (p=0.000*p*=0.000) and SN (p=0.000*p*=0.000) demonstrated significant effects. Using VAF, PN showed partial mediation (VAF=20%−80%*VAF*=20%−80%), while SN indicated stronger mediation levels.

Table 8: Mediation Analysis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Attitude -> Intention to visit	-0.069	-0.069	0.056	1.237	**0.216**
Attitude -> Purchase intention					
Perceived behaviour control -> Intention to visit	0.093	0.095	0.066	1.415	**0.158**
Perceived behaviour control -> Purchase intention					
Perceived norms -> Intention to visit	0.417	0.419	0.055	7.634	**0.000**
Perceived norms -> Purchase intention					
Purchase intention -> Intention to visit					
Subjective norms -> Intention to visit	0.215	0.217	0.045	4.778	**0.000**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Attitude -> Intention to visit	0.069	0.069	0.056	1.237	**0.216**
Perceived behaviour control -> Intention to visit	0.093	0.095	0.066	1.415	**0.158**
Perceived norms -> Intention to visit	0.417	0.419	0.055	7.634	**0.000**
Subjective norms -> Intention to visit	0.215	0.217	0.045	4.778	**0.000**

(vi) Bootstrapping results

The bootstrapping results as depicted in Table 9 below provide insights into the direct relationships between variables. Attitude (O = 0.096, p = 0.223) and perceived behavior control (O = 0.130, p = 0.157) have non-significant effects on purchase intention, suggesting no direct impact. However, perceived norms (O = 0.581, p = 0.000) and subjective norms (O = 0.300, p = 0.000) show significant positive effects on purchase intention, confirming their strong influence. Additionally, purchase intention (O = 0.717, p = 0.000) significantly affects the intention to visit, emphasizing its mediating role as suggested by Wold, H. (1982). The significant p-values for perceived norms, subjective norms, and purchase intention confirm robust relationships, while other paths show weaker or no effects.

Table 9: Bootstrapping Results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Attitude -> Purchase intention	-0.096	-0.098	0.079	1.220	**0.223**
Perceived behaviour control -> Purchase intention	0.130	0.132	0.092	1.419	**0.157**
Perceived norms -> Purchase intention	0.581	0.582	0.064	9.111	**0.000**
Purchase intention -> Intention to visit	0.717	0.720	0.041	17.577	**0.000**
Subjective norms -> Purchase intention	0.300	0.303	0.065	4.630	**0.000**

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study offer nuanced insights into the role of normative influences on consumer behavior in second-hand markets, addressing a critical gap in sustainable consumption literature. The partial mediation effects of perceived and subjective norms on purchase intentions underscore their significant influence in shaping consumer decisions, consistent with prior studies highlighting the power of social pressures in promoting eco-conscious behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Kumar et al., 2020). These norms likely reflect societal expectations and peer influences, suggesting that normative messaging could be a powerful tool for policymakers and marketers aiming to foster sustainable practices about second-hand purchases.

Interestingly, the study reveals that attitude and perceived behavioral control are not significant predictors of purchase intentions within the context of second-hand shopping. This finding diverges from traditional behavioral models, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), where these constructs are typically central (Ajzen, 1991). One potential explanation is the unique nature of second-hand markets, where external factors like product availability, quality variability, and price sensitivity may override individual attitudes or perceived ease of action. This aligns with studies by Wang et al. (2021) and Guiot & Roux (2010), which emphasize situational and market-specific factors in consumer decision-making.

The use of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) provides robust evidence for the hypothesized relationships, ensuring the reliability of the findings. The methodological rigor, including the assessment of mediation effects, enhances the study's contribution to understanding consumer behavior dynamics in sustainable consumption contexts. Moreover, this research highlights practical implications, suggesting that marketers can design campaigns emphasizing social approval and community benefits to amplify normative influences.

While this study offers valuable insights, the insignificance of attitude and perceived behavioral control warrants further exploration. Future research could examine how intrinsic motivators, such as environmental ethics, interact with normative influences or explore these dynamics across diverse cultural and demographic groups to enhance generalizability.

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