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“CONSUMERS’ WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR GREEN PRODUCTS IN SRI LANKA”

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to investigate the consumers’ willingness to pay for green products in Sri Lanka. The general objective of this study is to identify Sri Lankan consumers’ perception towards purchasing and their willingness to pay for green products. Further, the study attempts to identify the relevance of Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to assess the consumers’ willingness to pay for green products, and to identify the factors that influence the willingness to pay for green products, thereby influencing the payment behaviour towards green products. The study found that Eco-Literacy, Environmental Concern, Normative Beliefs, Willingness to Pay for Green Products and Payment Behaviour influence the consumer perception to purchase green products. Moreover, the study revealed that Eco-Literacy, Environmental Concern and Normative Beliefs have a significantly positive impact on willingness to pay for green products in Sri Lanka. However, the impact of normative beliefs on willingness to pay for green products is the most crucial factor in explaining 93% of the consumer willingness to pay for green products. Further, the study found that willingness to pay for green products is explaining 100% of the consumers’ payment behaviour for green products. Finally, the study suggests that Sri Lanka should focus more on policies that enhance the consumer awareness towards eco-literacy, environment safeguarding and consumer willingness to purchase green products.

Keywords: Green Products, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Willingness to Pay

1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change, waste generation, gas emissions and natural disasters have significantly affected the world environment, thus impacting all living beings, nature and socio-economic status of people living in the world. The increased growth rates of world economies are to be held responsible for the intensified global consumerism, which has roots of over utilization of natural resources leading to increased environmental degradation (Al Mamun et al., 2018). In Sri Lanka, the rising population, coupled with post-independence industrialization and urbanization have led to some major environmental issues such as solid waste generation and gas emissions. This process has led to a scenario where country’s concerns pertaining to the deteriorating natural environment have compelled both organizations and Sri Lankan consumers to minimize the adverse effects inflicted towards environment. Hence, consumers have been motivated to progressively pay more attention towards green products as a crucial effort to safeguard and preserve environment.

Green products are ecological products that do not pollute the environment and have less adverse impact over the environment than the traditional products. According to Mishra and Sharma (2010) green products are authentically grown, reusable and recyclable consumables containing natural and recycled ingredients, which would protect and revise the natural environment by conserving energy and minimizing pollution, waste and toxic agents. More importantly, green consumables include more environmentally friendly content and packaging that would reduce the adverse impacts towards the environment (Chen and Chai, 2010).

Above characteristics of green products ensure the principles of sustainable development, thus informed consumers demand more of such products (Maichum et al., 2016). Moreover, studies have identified that willingness among consumers to pay for green products is one of the key forces for producers to focus their attention on producing more environmentally friendly products and services (Lanzini et al., 2016).

However, Sri Lanka being a developing country, has achieved a limited success over green products in the mass market, owing to the fact that there can be discrepancies between Sri Lankan consumers' perception about environmental issues, their willingness to pay and their actual purchase behaviour. This concern has raised a greater importance of understanding the perceptions among Sri Lankan consumers towards environmental issues and their willingness to pay for consuming green products. At this background, this study will be an initial attempt to identify Sri Lankan consumers' perception towards purchasing and their willingness to pay for green products.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

2.1 MATERIALS

TPB is one of the most influential and acceptable theories, which explains the behavioural intentions that could be predicted by socio-cognitive factors such as attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, especially in the academic area of environmentally friendly consumption behaviour (Al Mamun, et al., 2018). Firstly, the behavioural intention represents one's stimulus in the sense of that person's conscious plan or decision to perform certain behaviour (Conner & Armitage, 1998). Generally, the stronger the intention is, the more likely the behaviour will be performed. Secondly, the attitude refers to the magnitude at which a person has favorable or unfavorable feelings of the behaviour of interest. Finally, the subjective norm explains one's belief about what others think of him performing that behaviour. Hence, it is one's perception of the social environment about the performed behaviour. So that this study is predominantly based on the TPB and attempting to analyze the consumers' willingness to pay for green products. Further, attitudes, subjective norms and the perceived behavioural controls indicate the behavioural intention which is a proxy measure for behaviour, before the behaviour takes place.

More importantly, literature reveals that TPB framework has been widely used in the research area of environmentally friendly consumption behaviour. Maichum et al. (2016) investigated the purchase intention of green products among Thai consumers using extended theory of planned behaviour. As TPB expressed, the findings of the study revealed that consumer attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural norms make a positive impact towards purchasing intention of green products. Furthermore, it should be noted that, results indicated that the environment concern has a significant influence on attitudes, perceived behavioural control and hence, purchasing intention for green products. As per the findings, the environmental knowledge does not have a direct impact on purchase intention. However, there is an indirect effect through the attitudes (Maichum et al., 2016).

Moreover, Saha (2017) studied the consumer intention towards green consumerism in India by adopting TPB as the main theoretical framework. In this study, the author has extended the TPB framework by adopting additional constructs such as social values, environmental knowledge, environmental concern and value of money. The data has been analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling and, findings indicate that the factors which consider within the TPB framework and the outside of it has a clear impact on predicting the consumers' intention and thereby purchase intention.

Kalafatis et al. (1999) examined the green marketing and the Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour as a cross-market examination in both United Kingdom and Greece. Findings of the study favourably supports the TPB explaining the behavioural intention. Furthermore, Kumar (2012) studied purchasing behaviour for environmentally sustainable products using TPB. In the study, author has examined the determinants of the purchase intention for environmentally sustainable products which leads to purchase behaviour. The study revealed that environmental knowledge has a positive impact on attitudes towards environmentally sustainable products and hence, towards the purchase intention. Moreover, the same study found that perceived behavioural control has a positive relationship with purchasing intention.

Within the local context, Achchuthan and Thirunavukkarasu (2016) examined the green consumerism in Sri Lanka, employing TPB in a modified manner. They found that environmental attitude, perceived consumer effectiveness and health consciousness have positive impacts on purchase intention while green purchase intention was not significantly influenced by environmental concern, social influence, media influence and perceived government initiatives.

More importantly, the studies on TPB and its applicability on willingness to pay for green products, identified eco literacy, environmental concern, attitudes towards environmentally friendly products, normative beliefs and perceived behavioural control as major socio-cognitive factors which motivate the consumer's willingness to pay for green products.

2.1.1 ECO LITERACY

As environmentally friendly products are analyzed, ecological knowledge or the eco-literacy is referred as the ability of identifying ecological concepts, symbols and behaviours (Laroche et al., 2001). Cheah and Phau (2011) examined the impact of eco-literacy on willingness to pay for green products. The study contended that eco-literacy, interpersonal influence and value orientation have a strong correlation with the willingness to pay for environmentally friendly products. Further, Al Mamun et al. (2018) examined the willingness to pay for environmentally friendly products among low-income households along Coastal Peninsular Malaysia and found that eco-literacy has a positive effect on consumers attitudes towards environmentally friendly products.

2.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Environmental concern is the evaluation of one's attitude towards facts, his own behaviour, or the behaviour of others that has consequences towards the environment (Kai & Haokai, 2016). Stern and Dietz (1994) suggested that attitudes about environmental issues can be explained by three motivations, such as concern for self (egoistic), concern for other people (social-altruistic) and concern for the biosphere (biospheric). However, in the literature, environmental concern has been taken to explain the willingness to pay for environmentally friendly product in a greater extent. Saha (2017) argued that environmental concern has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. In addition, Khachatryan et al. (2014) examined the effect of individual environmental concerns on willingness to pay for sustainable plant attributes. The results showed that individuals are willing to pay a premium for energy-saving production practices, non-plastic containers such as compostable, plantable and recyclable and locally grown plants.

2.1.3 ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

According to Kumar and Jha (2017), the attitude of the consumer is a mixture of his beliefs, feelings and buying plans towards eco-friendly products within the setting of marketing. Cheah and Phau (2011) examined the attitudes towards environmentally friendly products with eco-literacy, interpersonal influence and value orientation. Findings revealed that having favourable attitudes towards environmentally friendly products enhances the purchasing behaviour of environmentally friendly products. Further, Kumar and Jha (2017) studied the attitudes of consumers towards eco-friendly products in Kerala state of India. Findings of the study emphasized that majority of the consumers among the sample have moderate and high levels of attitudes towards environmentally friendly products. Thus, the socio-economic profile of the consumers has significantly made an impact on attitudes towards environmentally friendly products.

2.1.4 NORMATIVE BELIEFS

Normative beliefs refer to the one's belief about what others think of him performing a particular behaviour. It relates to a person's perception of the social environment surrounding of the behaviour. Normative beliefs are determined by the expectations of the significant others such as family members, relatives, friends, colleagues and others who can create a pressure on particular individual (Chen & Deng, 2016). Hence, TPB emphasizes that normative beliefs have a significant influence on the behavioural intention. Kumar et al (2017) examined the role of beliefs in the consumer behaviour in relation to the purchase of environmentally friendly products by employing TPB. Findings revealed that multiple beliefs about environmentally friendly products, support TPB in regard to green purchase behavioural intent, and show a statistically significant indirect link between altruism and green purchase behaviour. Kim et al. (2015) investigated determinants that included personal values, pro-environmental beliefs, and pro-environmental norms for enhancing consumers' purchase intention of eco-friendly outdoor wear. Findings of the study explained that there are significant differences in personal value sub-dimensions, pro-environmental beliefs, pro-environmental norms, and purchase intention of eco-friendly outdoor wear products according to respondents' gender and age. In addition, personal values affect pro-environmental beliefs in social power and pro-environmental beliefs affect pro-environmental norms, which then affect the purchase intentions of eco-friendly outdoor wear.

2.1.5 PERCEIVED BEHAVIOURAL CONTROL

Perceived behavioural control explains the acquisition of opportunity and resources, such as skills and cooperation with others (Chen & Deng, 2016). TPB clearly states that perceived behavioural controls is a significant determinant of a behavioural intention and human behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Moreover, existing literature explored this specific correlation in the context of consumption of environmentally friendly products. Chen and Deng (2016) studied the green purchase intentions from the perspective of product knowledge.

In the study, the relationships between independent variables (green purchase attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control) and green purchase intentions were analyzed. Findings of the study revealed that green purchase attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control have significantly moderating effect on the green purchase intentions.

In this context, it should be noted that, even though there are international studies conducted in this direction, there has not been any systematic research on consumers' willingness to pay for green products in the context of Sri Lanka. In this backdrop, this study would be the first attempt to investigate potentially grounder insights in this direction. Hence, this will fulfil the vacuum in Sri Lankan academia on consumers' willingness to pay for green products.

2.2 METHOD

2.2.1 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The growing significance of green consumption and the increasing purchase of less polluting products that reflect environmentally friendly behaviour have turned the topic into a popular research issue among scholars. However, there exists a great vacuum in literature in this direction in the case of Sri Lanka as a developing country. More importantly, Sri Lanka has a limited success of green products in the domestic market due to discrepancies between Sri Lankan consumers' perception about environmental issues, their willingness to pay and their actual purchase behaviour. Given that, it is highly prudent to answer the question of how Sri Lankan consumers' perception towards purchasing and their willingness to pay for green products has developed.

2.2.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to identify Sri Lankan consumers' perception towards purchasing and their willingness to pay for green products. Under the general objective, there are following specific objectives,

- To identify the relevance of TPB in order to assess the consumers' willingness to pay for green products.
- To identify the factors that influence the willingness to pay for green products, thereby influencing the payment behaviour towards green products.
- To identify feasible policies that would improve willingness among consumers to pay for green products.

2.2.3 METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a cross-sectional design to gather primary quantitative data through a structured questionnaire. Methodology is focused on identifying the factors that influence the willingness to pay for green products, thereby influencing the payment behaviour towards green products among Sri Lankan consumers. The study adopts a random sampling technique to generate a sample of more than 200 Sri Lankan consumers. The operational methodology adopted for this study is a factor analysis which has three stages. First stage is the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to identify the major factors that influence the consumer willingness to pay for green products. Second stage is the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to confirm the identified major factors from the EFA. Finally, the Structural Equation Model (SEM) to identify the relationships between the identified factors in the model. Further, the study includes the following hypothesis testing.

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): Eco-Literacy (EL) has a significantly positive effect on consumer willingness to pay for green products in Sri Lanka.
- Hypothesis 2 (H2): Environmental Concern (EC) has a significantly positive effect on consumer willingness to pay for green products in Sri Lanka.
- Hypothesis 3 (H3): Normative Beliefs (NB) have a significantly positive effect on consumer willingness to pay for green products in Sri Lanka.
- Hypothesis 4 (H4): Consumer Willingness to Pay for Green Products (WTP) has a significantly positive effect on payment behaviour towards green products in Sri Lanka.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The exploratory analysis carried out in the materials identified 32 factors that affect consumer willingness to pay for green products. This indicate that the results obtained from EFA for the 25 observed variables are reliable. Factors identified from materials with regard to perceived behaviour control were ignored from the EFA. CFA was conducted to verify the factor structure of the identified set of variables as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1: Rotated Component Matrix of the Accepted Model

Observed Variables	Components				
	EL	EC	NB	WTP	PB
Check eco-labels	0.769				
Gain information on green products	0.803				
Knowledge on green packages and products	0.758				
Social changes are needed to protect environment		0.795			
Humans must live in harmony with nature		0.734			
Environmental problems are important to address		0.865			
Should care more about environmental problems		0.774			
Environment protection is needed at purchasing		0.437			
Environment friendly products reduce global warming		0.626			
Family's opinion on your eco-friendly practices			0.574		
Friends' opinion on your eco-friendly practices			0.834		
Family's opinion on your green purchases			0.687		
Friends' opinion on your green purchases			0.843		
Pay extra for EFPs for the same performance				0.778	
Pay extra for EFPs even if it had a less-appealing design				0.591	
High probability of paying extra for green products				0.785	
You pay extra for EFPs as you replace any appliance				0.739	
You pay extra for EFPs against non-EFPs				0.830	
Intend to pay more for green products				0.811	
Pay extra for EF manufactured and grown products					0.567
Pay extra for eco-labelled products					0.634
Pay extra for reusable packed products (glass, jars, etc)					0.838
Pay extra for low-energy appliances					0.762
Talk about the benefits of paying more for EFPs					0.527
Set a positive environmental example to the society					0.436

Source: Author generated from SPSS

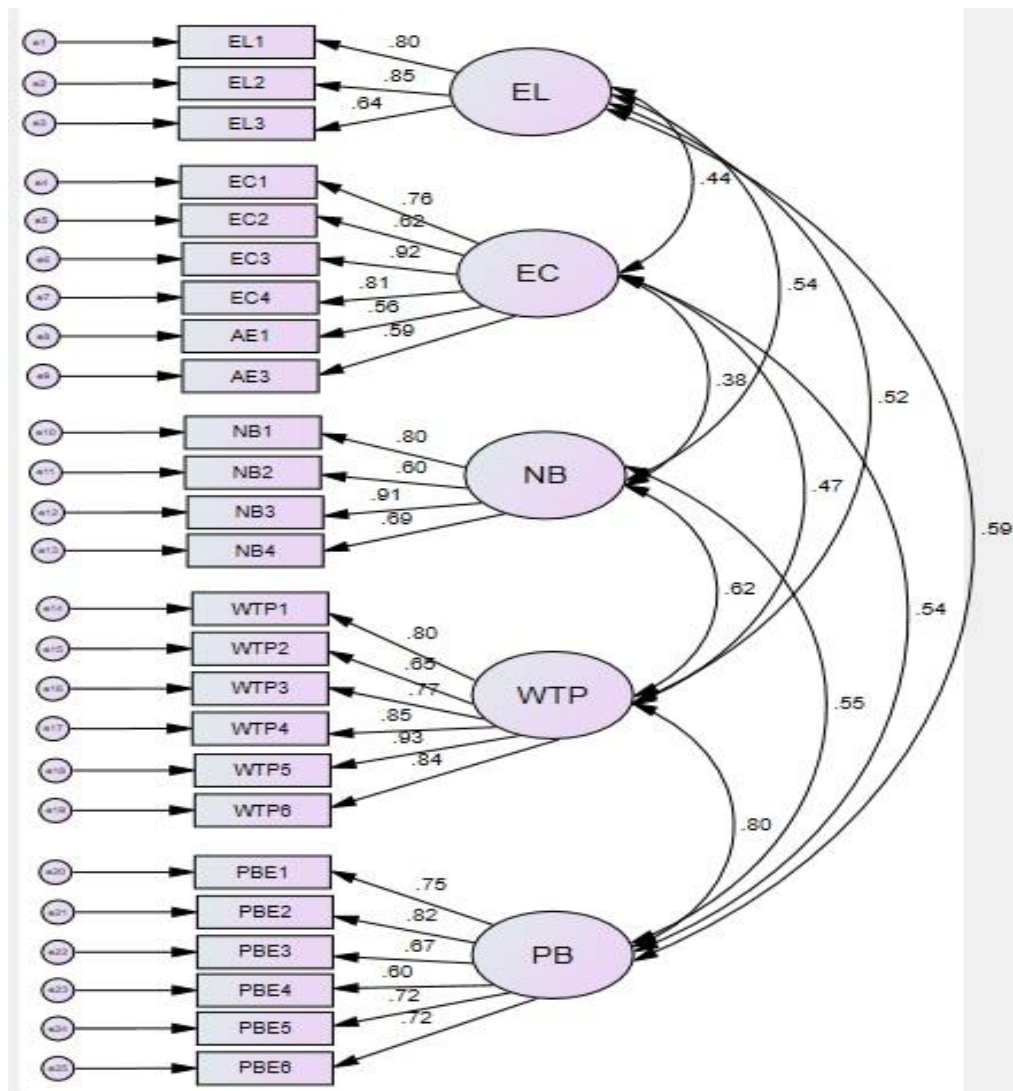
According to Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, this study has a high sample adequacy due to the KMO value of 0.911, confirming acceptance of the modified model. The resulting five components explain 67% of total variance and were labelled as follows to explain all factors related to the underlying features of factors under each category. To measure the reliability of latent constructs, the Cronbach Alpha test was carried out, and as shown in the Table 2 it is more than 0.8 for each of the five components. Accordingly, it indicates that the results are highly reliable.

Table 2: Results from Cronbach alpha from EFA

Latent Construct	Cronbach Alpha Value
Eco-Literacy (EL)	0.805
Environmental Concern (EC)	0.852
Normative Beliefs (NB)	0.845
WTP for EFPs (WTP)	0.918
Payment Behaviour for EFPs (PB)	0.862

Source: Author generated from SPSS

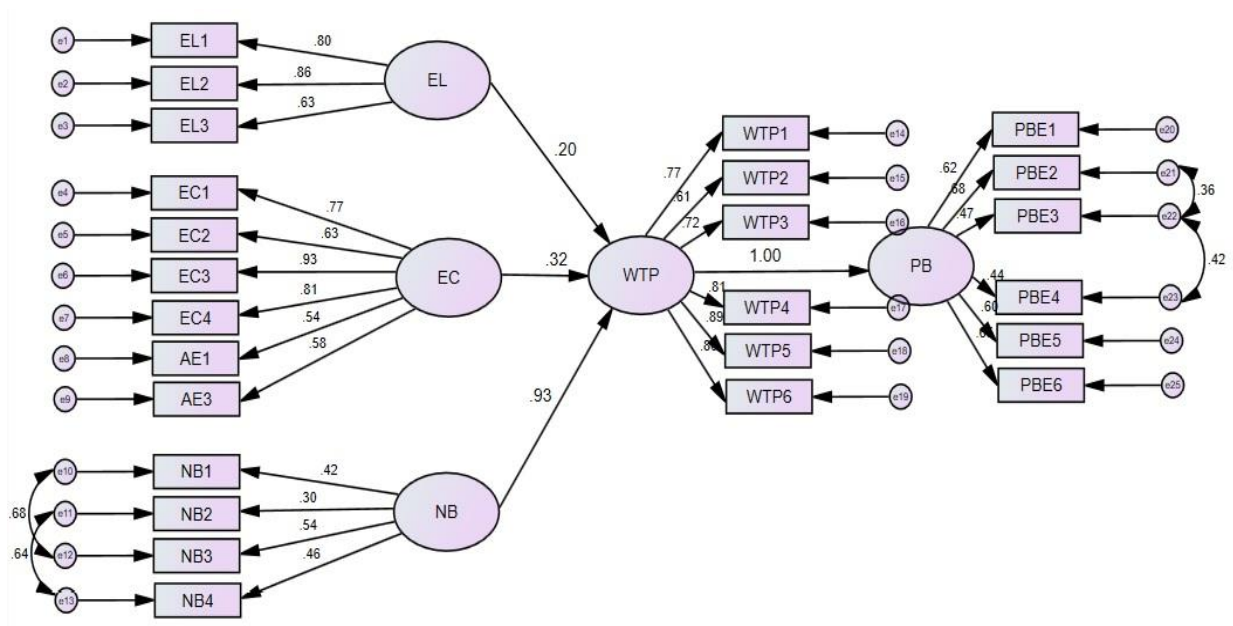
Figure 1: Output from the Accepted Model of CFA



Source: Author generated from SPSS AMOS

As depicted in the Figure 1, all factor loadings for the observed variables are above 0.5. Higher loadings of variables suggest that consumers' perception towards green products is influenced by Eco-Literacy (EL), Environmental Concern (EC), Normative Beliefs (NB), Willingness to Pay (WTP) and Payment Behaviour (PB). For a model to be valid, the CMIN/DF value must be in the range of 1.0-3.0 (Awang, 2014). Therefore, the accepted model is considered as the best fit model extracted from the CFA, with a CMIN/DF value of 2.278 and RMSEA value of 0.078. This indicates that the model has achieved the absolute fit. In addition, the model is identified as a valid model through achieving uni-dimensionality with factor loadings greater than 0.5 for all observed variables.

Figure 2: Output from the Accepted model of SEM



Source: Author generated from SPSS AMOS

The SEM was employed in order to identify the conceptual relationship as expressed in the aforementioned hypotheses. The model has CMIN/DF value of 2.795 which is in the range of 1.0 to 3.0 as per the model fit requirement. However, the RMSEA value 0.093 which is greater than the requirement of 0.08. Hence, the model has only achieved the parsimonious fit (Awang, 2014). As appeared in the Figure 2, Eco-Literacy (EL), Environmental Concern (EC) and Normative Beliefs (NB) have a significantly positive relationship with Willingness to Pay for Green Products (WTP). Moreover, Willingness to Pay for Green Products (WTP) has a significantly positive relationship with Payment Behaviour for Green Products (PB). As per the coefficient values, Eco-Literacy (EL) is impacting 20% of the Willingness to Pay for Green Products (WTP). Environmental Concern (EC) is impacting 32% of Willingness to Pay for Green Products (WTP) and Normative Beliefs (NB) are impacting 93% of consumer Willingness to Pay for Green Products (WTP). More importantly, consumer Willingness to Pay for Green Products (WTP) is impacting 100% towards the payment behaviour for the green products in Sri Lanka. According to the SEM, normative beliefs have a comparatively higher impact towards willingness to pay for green products in Sri Lanka. As given in the Figure 2, the significantly positive relationships confirm that all the developed hypotheses are acceptable.

4. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study mainly focuses on identifying the factors that influence the consumers' perception towards green products in Sri Lanka. Materials identified seven major variables that influence the consumer perception and willingness to pay for green products. However, the EFA and CFA identified only five variables out of seven that influence the consumer perception and willingness to pay for green products in the Sri Lankan context. The identified major latent variables are Eco-Literacy, Environmental Concern, Normative Beliefs, Willingness to Pay for Green Products and Payment Behaviour towards Green Products. The study found that Eco-Literacy, Environmental Concern and Normative Beliefs have a significantly positive impact on willingness to pay for green products in Sri Lanka. However, the impact of normative beliefs on willingness to pay for green products is the most crucial factor in explaining 93% of the consumer willingness to pay for green products. This particular finding states that Sri Lankans are willing to pay more for green products not because of their eco-knowledge or environmental concern, but because of the social norms of respecting buyers who would purchase green products. Hence, policies in this direction should focus more on enhancing the consumer awareness towards eco-literacy and environment safeguarding concerns of consumers in Sri Lanka. Further, the study revealed that willingness to pay for green products is explaining 100% of the consumers' payment behaviour for green products. This states that if consumers have the willingness to pay for green products, there is a 100% guarantee that they would definitely end up purchasing the green products. Hence, policies should focus more on enhancing consumer willingness to purchase green products in Sri Lanka, so that Sri Lanka will be one of the prominent countries in the world with respect to enhanced consumerism in eco-friendly products.

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