

Chapter 8

Green Behavior and Sustainable Consumption – A Gratifying Conclusion of Environmental Movement

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WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Earth is currently facing severe degradation, from global warming, ozone layer depletion, and large scale pollution among other causalities. Majority of these depredate forces have been traced back to exploitive human behaviors (UNEP, 2012). However, the environmental movement which was developed to protect the environment against such exploitive human actions, demands a change in our behavior towards the environment. The increasing awareness brought upon consumers by this movement, on the effect of our behavior on the environment, (Jackson 2005) which supports the adoption of environment friendly behavior. The concern over environmental degradation as a movement, first started in the United States of America (U.S.A), Europe, and then Asia. In United States of America, the movement appeared for the first time during the 1960s and 1970s, partially after experiencing the drawbacks from use of modern technology, and the first oil crisis (Grunert and Juhl, 1995). During the twentieth century, several environmental groups made attempts to create awareness among public on environmental conservation. For instance, Rachel Carson's bestseller book entitled "Silent Spring" focused on the hazardous effects of application of DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) and other human activities on the ecosystem and the environment (Carson, 1962).

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The author attempted to explain how each and every human activity had a direct or indirect effect on the food chain, its ecosystem, and ultimately the environment. The observations made by Rachel Carson were supported by then President of the United States of America, President John F. Kennedy, who acknowledged the importance of her book and environmental movement for the nation and the world.

Large scale environmental calamities were often found to be a result of human miscalculations or natural disasters. For instance, the 1969 fire on the Cuyahoga River was the result of an oil spill along the Californian coast of Santa Barbara. This was one of the first environmental disasters to raise the public hackles on environmental responsibility and conservation in the U.S.A (Rootes and Leonard, 2009). The nearly recent Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant disaster of 2011 in Japan, was the result of a tsunami caused by massive earthquakes in the region. The resulting nuclear spill got released into the local waters, and would require decades of cleansing to completely remove the radioactive traces (Steven, 2012). Over the years, a series of such environmental disasters have raised global public concerns on environmental safety and conservation.

The increasing emphasis by environmentalists on environmental conservation, influenced the public to accept more environment friendly choices and manners (Lowe, 1992; Lowe et.al., 2008). In accordance with such changes, the first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970 by millions of people around the world (Earth Day Network, 2012). This gave birth to new concepts like green behavior, green consumerism, and sustainability.

The environmental movement started in Europe around the same time. The book 'Silent Spring' created awareness among the people of Europe on the drawbacks of industrialization (Dalton, 1994). Specifically, environmental disasters like the Torrey Canyon oil spill in 1967 off the south-west coast of England, brought about many public protests and complaints (Dalton,1994;McCormick,1989). Consequently, the United Nations (UN) Stockholm Conference of 1972 was held to discuss on environment related issues and propose possible solutions for environmental conservation. Thereby, the initial Environmental Action Programme (EPA) was established by the European Council Committee

in 1972. The EPA focused mainly on nature, sources of water and air, in addition to environmental measures on production, planning, management, and product policy (Scheuer, 2005).

The environmental movement was initiated across Asian countries as well. For instance, the Malaysian government emphasized on the important of environmental conservation in Malaysia by introducing Sustainable Development via the Third Malaysia Plan (3MP) with the main focus on economic progress, environmental protection, and social welfare (Economic Plan Unit, 1976-1980). In order to support its policies towards environmental conservation, the Malaysian government established the Department of Environment (DOE) in 1975. The functions of the DOE included the prevention, control, and abatement of pollution in the country through enforcement of the Environmental Quality Act of 1974. The National Environmental Policy (DASN) was also initiated, with focus on the economic, social and cultural issues, and improvement of the national lifestyles through application of the sustainability concept. Later, in the Sixth Malaysian Plan (6MP), the Malaysian government stressed more towards sustainment of the environment (Economic Plan Unit, 1990-1995). In 1994, Malaysia also cooperated with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Ninth Malaysian Plan (9MP) (2006-2010), and the Tenth Malaysian Plan (10MP) (2010-2015) focused more on the promotion of environment friendly or green behavior. The government also passed policies like the National Energy Policy, and the National Forestry Act for developments in energy efficiency and natural resource protection respectively (CETDEM, 2012; Chua and Oh, 2010).

GREEN BEHAVIOR

The environmental movement has brought about a change in public behavior towards the environment. People have realized the effects of their behavior on the environment, and the important role they play in its conservation (Mostafa, 2007). Therefore, the intention to adopt new environment friendly behavior was initiated among the public, mostly by environmentalists.

The green or environment friendly behavior is generally (or according to the knowledge of environmental science) judged in the context of

the considered society, as a protective way towards environmental conservation for a healthy earth (Krajhanzl, 2010). This behavior could be performed via activities like resource management, use of harmless materials, waste management (Veleva, 2011), green purchasing behavior (Majláth, 2010), recycling of materials, saving energy and water usage, as well as use of public transportation (Hosseinpour et. al., 2014).

The green behavior concept is widely studied across institutions like colleges and universities, and have found rapid acceptance among the societies (Fuller, 2010). The agencies like the United Nation Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aims to enhance the exhibitionism of green behavior globally, in order to protect the environment from different levels of degradation (Hassan et.al., 2015). The development of green behavior led to the introduction of the concept of green consumerism and green consumers.

GREEN CONSUMERISM

Consumers have realized the fact that their lifestyle directly affects the environment (Mostafa, 2007). The raising concern on this issue led to the development of a new group of consumers, known as the green consumers. These green consumers are concerned about environmental degradation (Soonthonsmai, 2007), and put efforts to organize petitions, boycott non-environment friendly manufacturers and retailers, and promote environmental protection behavior (Fegus, 1991). This change in consumer behavior was observed since the 1990s. For instance, during that decade 79 percent of Americans labelled themselves as environmentalists, following green practices like recycling (82 percent), and 93 percent of Americans believed their lifestyles to be environment friendly (Waterviews Globe Scan, 2009).

However, all consumers who consider environmental issues cannot be categorized under this segment. Simmons Experian Research Services (2007) divided consumers into four groups according to their behavior towards the environment:

- **Behavioral Greens:** This group of people thinks and acts green, holds negative attitudes towards products that pollute, and incorporate green practices on a regular basis.
- **Think Greens:** This group of people thinks but does not necessarily act green.
- **Potential Greens:** They neither behave nor think along particular environmentally conscious lines, and remain neutral on key green issues
- **True Browns:** This group of people are not environmentally conscious, and may in fact have negative attitudes about the environmental movement.

Additionally, consumers of these days are more concerned on topics such as human rights and ethical issues. Therefore, some concepts like sustainable consumption was developed in tangent with such concerns.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

The concept of sustainable consumption was introduced during the UN Earth Summit at Rio in 1992 (Jackson, 2006). Brembeck et.al.(2007) believed that consumption could be perceived as a heterogeneous actors' assemblage involved in the routine of life, rather than reduction in consumption. Sustainable consumption is equal to greening the entire supply chain, from the production side, to manufacturing, and to final markets, while informing consumers on sustainability (Tania and Sigrid, 2006).

It is imperative to understand that green consumption differs from sustainable consumption. While green consumption focuses on the selection, use, and promotion of green products, sustainable consumption focuses on the environmental, economic, and ethical aspects (Lewis, 2014). Christer (2002) and Lewis (2014) believe policies to be a vital part of sustainability, but is not considered for green consumption. Thereby, Hobson (2006) considers green consumption to be a 'weak sustainability'.

Joohyung (2012) believe that understanding and recognizing the pro-environmental behavior of consumers is crucial to secure a sustainable

environment. However, this fact does not guarantee that consumers have intention to perform the behavior.

Guardian Sustainable Business (2010) conducted a study in the UK to understand consumer's purchasing behavior on the ethical and environmental grounds of sustainability. The study results showed that consumers were concerned about issues such as, climate change, pollution and exploitive usage of resources. Besides this, consumers also identified the ethical issues such as labor rights, human rights, fair trade, occupation health and safety as important while purchasing products. Furthermore, the consumer's attitude towards solving environmental issues were restricted to minimizing wastage, encouraging eco-friendly production processes, in addition to use of sustainable modes of transportation (European Commission, 2009).

According to Homburg and Matthies (2010), understanding the consumer's association with and importance of sustainability to them is the first step to achieving sustainable consumption. The consumer perceives a sustainable product to have a premium price tag (Guardian Sustainable Business, 2010; Marsh et.al., 2010) . While, self-image and peer acceptance play vital roles in performing sustainability in contrast the good level of awareness (Marsh et.al., 2010). Besides, the importance of sustainability as a product feature, differs from consumer to consumer. For instance, for some consumers' sustainability as a product feature stands in fourth place after quality, price, and availability of the product. Under such situations, the promotion of environmental education is a solution to increase the level of awareness of consumers on sustainable consumption and other ecological issues (Edwards, 2005). In order to accommodate such an objective, various consumer behavior models are being utilized currently in the field of green behavior performance.

MODELS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Research consists of two crucial elements namely, theory and observation (Trochim,2006). Theory is what goes on inside the scientist's mind while observation is what goes on in the real world which can be measured and observed (DevComPage, 2009). Theory guides every aspect of research, from the formulation of research question, through operationalization and

discussion. The continuous and active changes in consumers' attitude, perception and intentions, makes consumer behavior a difficult concept (Gorden, 1980). Being a dynamic concept, instability across locations and time periods is a part of consumer behavior (Engel et.al.,1995). In such situations, it is not easy for businesses to make decisions for their customers. Consequently, realizing consumers' behavior in order to meet their demands and to reach the business goals is essential for every business (Demer et.al., 2014).

Engagement in environment friendly behavior arises from the related influences of this behavior on people and environment in addition to the individual as decision maker (Culiberg and Bajde, 2013). Different consumer behavior models could be used to study environment friendly behavior. The models on consumer behavior are varied, especially due to the attention from various study fields of psychology, sociology, economics, and social anthropology (Naik and Reddy,1999). The models' concentration varies from focusing on internal factors (attitude, perception and intention) to external factors (norms, control factors, and incentives). According to Stern (2000), a practical and useful model is the one which covers (i) motivations, attitudes and values; (ii) contextual or situational factors; (iii) social influences; (iv) personal capabilities; and (v) habits. Adoption of behaviors like green behavior or sustainable consumption exhibits changing behavior. Behavior change is fast becoming the 'holy grail' of sustainable development policy (Jackson, 2005). The Theory of Reason Action (TRA) (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 2002) are some of the most widely used consumer behavior models in research.

According to the Theory of Reason Action (TRA), the attitude of a person towards a particular behavior and subjective norms are the two main components of intention to perform or not perform that behavior. Attitude of a person towards a particular behavior is related to that person's evaluation of that behavior. Subjective norms are related to social pressure on a person, and norms expect an individual to perform or not perform a behavior. In this model the main indicator of a behavior is intention. Intention presents a person's motivation to carry out a behavior, which is formed through premeditation.

The difference between the Theory of Reason Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is the additional component of perceived behavioral control. Perceived behavioral control is in conjunction with a person's ability and control over a behavior. The two models try to provide the framework by which the intention of performing or not performing a behavior can be measured. The application of these models have been diverse. Lee (2009) used these models to study fashion behavior, while Dunn (2009) studied consumers' eating behavior. More recently, the above models were used to discover the influence of green activities like go green campaign on green behavior intention (Hosseinpour et.al.,2015).

The Norm Activation Theory (Schwartz, 1977) and the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior (Triandis, 1977) are two other well-known theories applied in the field of consumer behavior studies. Schwartz (1977) in the Norm Activation Theory state that, the personal norm is the only direct determinant of pro-social behavior. In this model (Figure 8.1), intention is rejected as an effective component of behavioral performance. In addition, personal norm as an opinion on moral responsibility and the only direct variable is adopted by person in pro-social behavior. Two components of awareness of consequences and acceptance of the personal responsibility influences personal norms in this model.

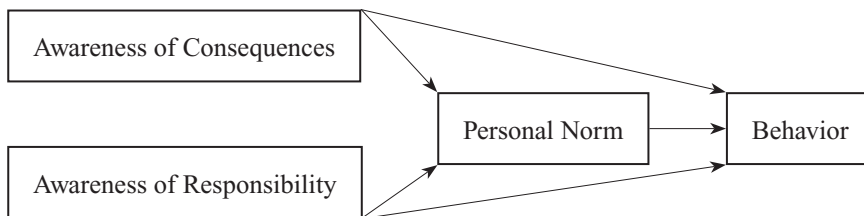


Figure 8.1 Norm Activation Theory

Source: Schwartz (1977)

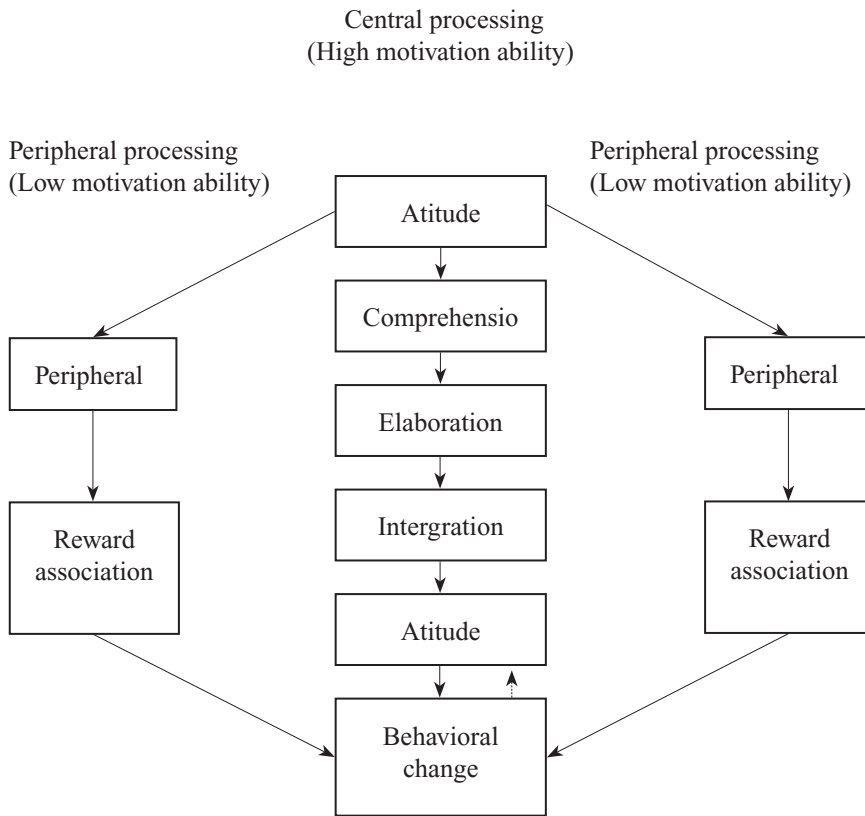


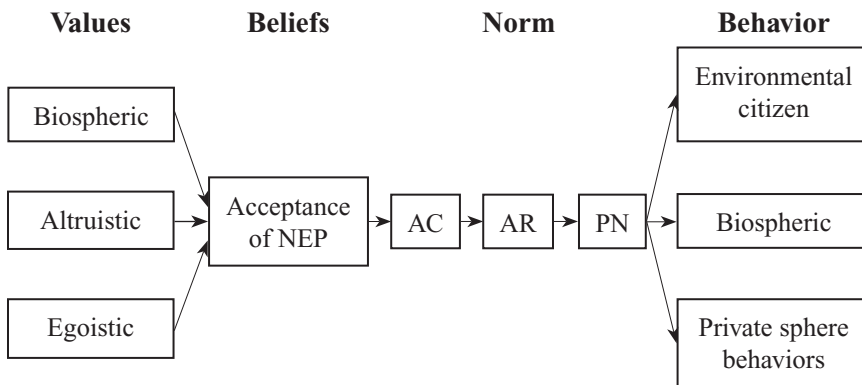
Figure 8.2 Elaboration Like hood Model

Source: Petty (1977); Petty and Cacioppo (1986)

On the other hand, there are available theories that concentrates on the role of attitude as a behavioral changing determinant. The most effective among those theories, is the Elaboration Like-hood Model (ELM) (Petty, 1977; Petty and Cacioppo,1986). According to this model, there are two different and effective processes involved in changing attitude, which are central processing route and peripheral processing. Comprehensive attention to the message and evaluation of its concept in addition to combination into an individual’s attitude set is related to the central processing route. Based on the ELM, higher motivation level and ability

among consumers to involve with the message depends on the route. However, according to the peripheral processing route, consumers are less motivated and less able to engage with the issue. In this case, peripheral ‘persuasion cues’ may be used to suggest ‘source attractiveness’. Therefore, the central process route is the main and the most effective component affecting attitude. Meanwhile, it should be considered that peripheral process is influential to change in attitude and behavior over long periods.

In terms of understanding pro-environmental consumer behavior, Stern’s Value Belief Norm Theory (Figure 8.3) is the most practical model (Gardner and Stern, 2002). Stern’s Value Belief Norm Theory relates to the Norm Activation Model. According to Value Belief Norm Theory, being aware of results in the Norm Activation Model could lead to acceptance of the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP). How much a person accepts NEP, links the biospheric and altruistic values with egoistic values. Besides, Stern believe that the model prepares ‘the best explanatory account to date, of a variety of behavioral indicators of non-activist environmentalism’.



AC = awareness of consequences
 AR = ascription of responsibility
 PN = personal norm

Figure 8.3 Value Belief Norm Theory

Source: Gardner and Stern (2002)

On the other hand, some researchers believe that intention plays a role in performing behavior. In this regard, the factors of attitude, past behavior and habit as internal factors, and social factors such as norms are effective for building on the essential intention. In such cases, models like the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior (Triandis, 1977) are employed by researchers. Mostly, this model is compared with the Attitude, Behavior, Context (ABC) model by Stern (2000). The ABC model considers the roles of attitude, contextual factor, personal capabilities, and habits in its framework. However, this idea is not considered in the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior model framework. According to the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior, belief about the outcome and evaluation of outcome builds up the attitude towards a particular behavior, and attitude is vital for intention. Besides, norms which are in conjunction with what should be performed and what should not be performed are in this model. Norms, roles, and self-concept make up the social factor. Roles are a “set of behaviors that are considered appropriate for persons holding particular positions in a group”. Self-concept is related to the idea that a person has of his/her self. Emotions are related to a decision or the situation that is supposed to be separate from rational estimate of outcome of behavior (Figure 8.4).

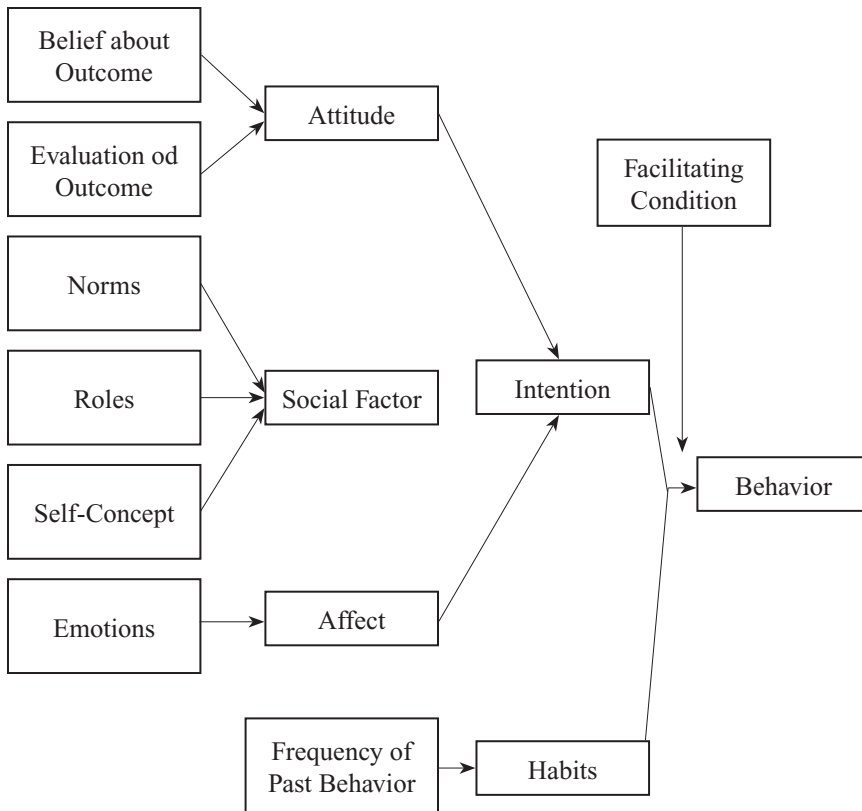


Figure 8.4 Theory of Interpersonal Behavior

Source: (Triandis, 1977)

Additionally, the use of ethical theories to study eco-friendly consumer behavior was suggested by Chan et.al. (2008). Thereby, the Issue-Contingent Model by Jones (1991) is considered below (Figure 8.5). In this model, there are four stages of ethical decision making namely; recognizing a moral issue, making moral judgments, establishing a moral intent, and engaging in moral behavior. Furthermore, two other elements of moral intensity and organizational factor are considered in this model.

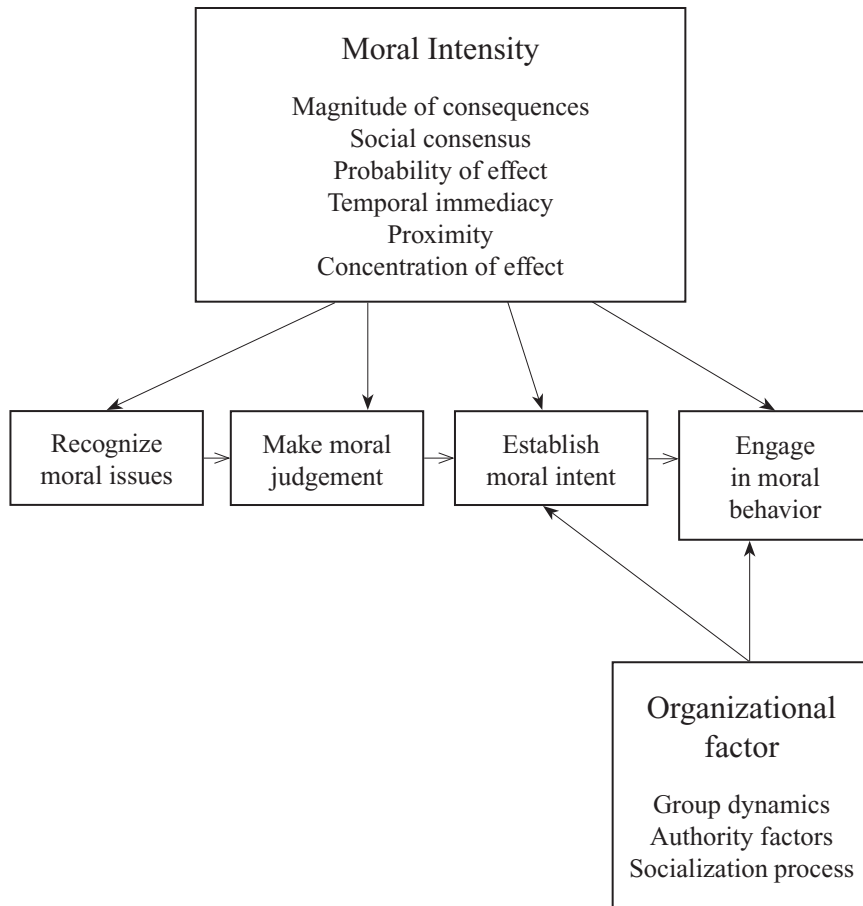


Figure 8.5 Issue-contingent model

Source: (Jones,1991)

There are some issues with regard to sustainability and how consumers behave towards this concept. A company that aims to practice sustainability, should consider the issues of customer health, safety and customer privacy along the product chain. More importantly, according to indicator of sustainability i.e. environment, economic and social in order to reach sustainable consumption, there is a need to change consumption

pattern. Consumers might carry different attitude towards sustainability and sustainable consumption. For instance, consumers might carry a positive attitude towards this concept which might lead to more intention to perform sustainability (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2002).

DISCUSSION

Earth is in challenge with the environment degradation, and human's behavior is the main reason of this disaster. In this regard, people around the world have realized the drawbacks of their behavior on environment and they put effort to reduce and even to stop the related drawbacks. In order to protect the earth, the environmental movements started around the world with the aim to raise public awareness on environmental protection. This led to the development of concepts like green or environment friendly behavior, and green consumerism. Mainly, these concepts aimed to protect earth and environment by pressuring sectors such as manufactures to be green. In order to reach this goal, global governments and world agencies invested their efforts to change public behavior towards environment conservation. In this regard, green consumers tried to change their behavior into a more environmentally friendly one. Changing in behavior is observed from purchasing behavior, recycling of materials to boycotting some environment harming manufacturers.

The concept of sustainability was introduced as part of the environment movement. Sustainability covers the three main focus areas of environment, ethical and economic. This led to the development of the concept of sustainable consumption. The sustainable consumption does not mean reduction in consumption, and involves the green footprint. In contrast, green behavior does not involve any policies, which is a core part of sustainable consumption.

Consumer behavior is a complex topic, and cannot be generalized. Thereby, a study on the environment friendly behavior of consumers require the use of specific consumer behavior models. The frameworks provides by the models helps in understanding the patterns in observed consumer behavior. However, the results obtained by researchers are often varied. For instance, some consumers might have an attitude towards sustainable

consumption by which they assume environmental degradation and ethical issues as vital. However, for some other consumers, this concept might not be that vital.

CONCLUSION

If the aim is to change behavior and to protect environment, some effort is required. At the first stage, awareness about environmental protection and concerned ethical issues are crucial since some might not have the knowledge about it or might have a wrong attitude toward it. In the second stage, environmental education to the whole society is vital. The important point is to change the behavior of people in the society. Hence, it is crucial to invest into programs to educate the public about environmental management. In this case, government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) might employ some tools such as go green campaigns or environmental education to change the behavior. More importantly, it should be considered that behavioral change is a time consuming and demanding act, that requires an investment of time and money to reach the final goal. Finally, concentrating on children could be helpful. Since children are the future adults in any society, any education to mold their behavior would stay on as a practice for their lives. Some evidences point towards the effectiveness of such environmental education programs on children's behavior changing. For instance, a study was conducted by Prestin and Pearce (2010) in U.S.A in order to promote recycling among children. Interestingly, the results showed the changes among children's attitude towards this concept and how they were intend on recycling.

Therefore, the future studies could apply some of the consumer models discussed in the chapter, in order to measure the sustainable consumption behavior or green behavior of consumers in different markets. Also, studies could be done to measure how these types of programs are actually effective on changing behavior of respondents towards more sustainable one. The reviewed theories in this chapter could be practically useful for researchers to provide the framework to discover consumer's green behavior.

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