



Rethinking Consumption: A Conceptual Paper on Circular Economy from a Marketing Perspective

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Citation: Muhammad Tahir Jan (2024) Rethinking Consumption: A Conceptual Paper on Circular Economy from a Marketing Perspective, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(4), 9540-9549

Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i4.4437

ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

The circular economy is rapidly expanding and many practitioners are becoming aware of this growth. Consumer demand for circular economy products has motivated businesses and stakeholders to transform their business and marketing operations into a circular form. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the factors that influence consumer purchase intention related to the circular economy. The study proposes a conceptual model that depicts multiple factors such as attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, convenience, environmental impact, and cause-related marketing that can possibly influence purchase intention. The methodology proposed involves collecting data from past studies on a similar research theme and developing a robust model related to circular economy from a marketing perspective. The proposed model of this study will be analysed using structural equation modelling software in the future. Literature review reveals that these factors possess unique attributes that can accelerate consumer purchase intention. The study further suggests that empirical research can be conducted in the future to test components of the factors included in the model. Therefore, the expected results can help green marketers and policymakers understand the factors that influence purchase intention and promote the development of a circular economy. The study concludes that consumers can significantly contribute to the growth of a circular economy by purchasing circular products.

Keywords: attitude, circular economy, perceived behavioural control, purchase intention, subjective norms, cause-related marketing.

1. Introduction

Human activities have had a negative impact on the environment, including flora and fauna, and this has become a global issue (Jan, 2022; 2023). As a result, there is an increasing awareness of the need to purchase and consume goods and services that meet environmental standards (Ali & Ahmad, 2016). The market share for circular economy and green products is currently worth \$200 million and is expected to increase (Chen, 2010). A survey by the National Green Market Institute suggests that the green market value may rise by 100% due to people rethinking their consumption habits in light of social and environmental concerns (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). Developing economies are looking to transition to a circular economy to optimize efficiency in products and services. Consumers play a crucial role in integrating circular initiatives in the marketplace for long-lasting success (Shevchenko et al., 2023). Their engagement is a core facilitator for a circular economy transition that will determine the demand for circular products that are high quality, repairable, durable and long-lasting (Shi et al., 2022). These products are reusable (Van Weelden et al., 2016), remanufactured (Piscicelli et al., 2018), shared (Camacho-Otero et al., 2018), recycled (Mahmoodi & Heydari, 2021), and second-hand products (Terzioğlu, 2021). The motivational role of consumers for these products can be attributed to the marketing factors influencing it from the circular economy perspective.

Recent discussions on sustainability and rethinking consumption on a circular economy model from a marketing perspective are ongoing (Jan, 2021, 2022; Murray et al., 2017). In addition, several businesses,

organisations and policy groups have declared support for the implementation of the circular economy principle guide (British Standards Institution, 2017). Nevertheless, modern studies have highlighted the early stages of circular economy strategies implementation policies (McDowall et al., 2017), as the transition within marketing perspective from linear to circular initiatives faces many institutional to technical market problems and obstacles (Jan, 2021; Mont et al., 2017), inclusive of attitudes, consumer behaviour and consumption style (Jan, 2022; 2023). Consumer behaviour is more difficult to predict and assess (Ajzen, 1991), unlike many participants (e.g. repairers, distributors, manufacturers) in the value chain of products who are predictable and driven by rewards, and legal provisions (Parajuly et al., 2020).

Although, many approaches have been developed to help lower resource and product consumption in the value chain to make the circular economy more circular (Morseletto, 2020) with the priority emphasizing products repair, remanufacturing, rethinking, reducing, recovery and refusing (Jan, 2021). Despite the growing attention on circular economy transitions from scholars, policymakers and industry experts, the role of circular economy from a marketing perspective vis-à-vis consumption and purchase intention remains underexplored (Georgantzis Garcia et al., 2021). Compared with other research themes in the marketing domain which covers circular indicator and framework assessment, lacking is the framework measurement of rethinking consumption and purchase intention in the circular economy. This deficiency has been highlighted in a recent study of circular economy research (Jan, 2021), especially in the implementation of macro-economy developing nations (Jan, 2022). Researchers like Harris et al., (2021) pinpoint the implementation of a circular economy to improve environmental performance emphasizing purchase intention circularity. Thus, the environmental assessment of purchase intention on circularity must be investigated from a consumer consumption perspective.

Nevertheless, consumer behaviour is crucial to enable circular economy operations of products and services to support the prosperous transition to a circular economy. From various points, Testa et al., (2020) examined the role of consumer behaviour in purchases of circular packages. Cordova-Pizarro et al., (2020) examined consumer awareness of circular products. Siminelli (2017) analyze marketing determinants of knowledge and culture. De Jesus & Mendonça (2018) examined core consumer barriers on the road to a circular economy. Furthermore, recent studies have focused on the applications of behavioural theories and changing behaviour toward circular consumption replacement (Parajuly et al., 2020). A weak scope of all possible circular economy strategies and purchase intention on environmental education has also been noted (Pérez-Belis et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to develop a model to improve the understanding of circular economy from the marketing perspective. This study fills all aforementioned gap highlighted and aim to clarify purchase intention contribution to circular economy implementation from the marketing perspective by developing a model-based approach. The study contributes by proposing circular economy-oriented products and measuring purchase intention consumer contributions to a circular economy. To attain this, the following research objectives are presented by analysing a systematic literature review within the lens of the circular economy theme.

RO1. To examine the impact of attitude on the purchase intention of circular products.

RO2. To examine the impact of subjective norms on the purchase intention of circular products.

RO3. To investigate the impact of perceived behavioural control on the purchase intention of circular products.

RO4. To investigate the impact of convenience on the purchase intention of circular products.

RO5. To examine the impact of environmental impact on the purchase intention of circular products.

RO6. To investigate the impact of cause-related marketing on the purchase intention of circular products.

The rest of the paper covers the literature review, proposed hypothesis, conceptual research model, methodology, discussion and implication, and conclusions.

2. Literature review

2.1 Circular economy and marketing

The circular economy plays an important role in the current economic situation due to the significant role it plays at the micro and macroeconomic levels. From a marketing perspective, a circular economy is worth millions of revenues in employment and gross domestic product (Fatimah & Biswas, 2017). It is a new marketing model that strives to transform market focus and promote responsible consumption and production (Berlin et al., 2022). Many studies have started to examine the different elements of circularity owing to the importance of integrating a circular economy from a marketing perspective. Hoffmann et al., (2020) assess the life cycle of diapers from circular economy. Husain et al., (2021) assess the implementation of model circularity. There are several insights into circular economy implementations from the marketing theme. First, consumer activities significantly contribute to the circular economy through purchase intention and buy to use and buy to return, where activities are related to influence marketing decisions.

Furthermore, in terms of approval of circular policies, circular-oriented products and consumer behaviour deal with varieties of circular products through new systems and marketing models which could be seen as an additional gain for consumers' environmental and economic benefit ties. However, the intention to behaviour gap in the circular economy remains an issue in the transition towards circular economy which needs to be considered in tackling circular economy products. In the circular economy framework, the gap entails consumers delineating environmental problems and plans to render solutions through the purchase of circular

products. However, consumers struggle to translate this into purchase intention which often leads to contradicting actions (Young et al., 2010). Furthermore, the lifecycle of a product is extended when it is purchased. Appropriate use, maintenance and reuse processes are established. Circular products have several users because they can be sold or donated for future use. Indeed, consumer purchase intention can be characterised by environmental awareness towards more consumption alternatives (Hobson et al., 2021). Hence, there is a need to monitor viable contributions to the circular economy in line with circular economy multi-dimensional constructs.

2.2 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is the possibility that a person is ready to buy a product or service in the future (Terblanche et al., 2023). Purchase intention in the scope of circular economy and marketing explained the possibility and willingness to give preference to circular products and services that are environmentally safe and friendly to consumers while making purchasing decisions (Alam et al., 2023). In the circular economy domain, purchase intention is a notable factor and a substitute for consumer actual purchasing intention (Ramayah et al., 2010). Many studies on marketing research have shown that circular product intention is an important component to be considered in a circular economy (Jan, 2022; 2023). The intention of an individual is completely under their strength which stems from a rational approach while making wilful decisions based on expected outcomes (Zhuang et al., 2021). However, an individual who shows concern towards the environment will illuminate positive attitude, norms, stronger perceived control and convenience which will result in the buying intention of circular products (Jan, 2021).

Furthermore, an individual with a positive or greater intention is more likely to purchase circular economy products than others (Hayat et al., 2021). Several studies have examined the antecedent of purchase intention in marketing research. Findings from various studies reveal that purchase intention is a significant factor to influences different variables. They include attitude (Alam et al., 2023; Jan, 2023), environmental concern (De Canio et al., 2021; Jan, 2022; Kim & Choi, 2005), perceived value (Deng, 2012; Srivastava et al., 2023), corporate social responsibility (Al-Haddad et al., 2022), social norms (Jia et al., 2023), consumer behaviour (Neima et al., 2023) and green trust (Zur et al., 2012).

2.3 Attitude

Attitude is a predisposition of a consumer to behave consistently favourably or unfavourably towards a given instance and situation (Terblanche et al., 2023). In addition, attitude is a psychological factor and phenomenon that is sharpened by many factors like cognitive evaluation, beliefs, values and emotional features towards any leading object (Khan et al., 2023). Individual belief in the traits of environmental sustainability or a particular object of a healthy alternative. Attitude is a leading factor in predicting purchase intention. In the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), attitude is regarded as the main factor in influencing purchase intention and predicting green behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Attitude toward circular economy from a marketing perspective is the likelihood to plan and the willingness to purchase products and services that are environmentally friendly and safer for current and future generations (Ho Nguyen et al., 2022). In the marketing context, purchase intention is the process individuals plan to buy products or services. Previous studies have explored attitude and noted that it is the strongest factor in TPB to purchase intention and behaviour (Dhir et al., 2021). Attitude is the strongest factor in consumer intention to retain green hotels (Yeh et al., 2021). Researchers like Wang et al. (2019) noted that attitude–intention–behaviour gaps do not exist in green hotels. This implies that attitude will not translate to green behaviour. Extant literature noted a mixed result and argued that attitude will illuminate purchase intention and behaviour (Verma et al., 2019). Many studies also highlighted the attitude gap – intention (Kang & Nicholls, 2021). These analyses need further research from a circular economy marketing perspective. This study further argues that attitude may improve purchase intention in the circular economy perspective.

2.4 Subjective Norm

Subjective norms are perceived social pressure, persuasion and influence to execute or not to execute a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), which is a consumer view and significantly influences individual choice and behavioural action (Lavuri, 2022). Subjective norms are established by peer groups, friends, family members and co-workers, and their influence on individuals' or consumers' opinions, choices and attitudes towards purchase intention (Singh & Verma, 2017), circular organic products (Rusyani et al., 2021), and consumers revisit circular economy services (Teng et al., 2014). Subjective norms crucially influence sustainable consumption, as noted by Lavuri et al., (2021). Friends and family norms and values have been significantly connected with purchase intention (Rusyani et al., 2021). Researchers (e.g. Rusyani et al., 2021) have shown that subjective norms significantly influence individual purchase intention towards eco-friendly products in a circular economy (Lavuri, 2022). The relationship between purchase intention and behaviour has been previously explored in an emerging economy (Khare, 2015). Additionally, some studies submitted that subjective norms are connected to purchase intention (Paul et al., 2016). Therefore, this study argued that subjective norms may influence circular economy intent and encourage purchase intention.

2.5 Perceived Behavioural Control

According to TPB, perceived behavioural control explains the ease and difficulty of executing and initiating an action (Ajzen, 1991). The action occurs when an individual is positively motivated and has a purposeful aim and intention (Lavuri, 2022). TPB requires the formulation of the previous intention to accelerate perceived control. Consumers perceived some considerations are more perceptual when executing purchase intention towards a product or service. Researchers like Olsen (2004), noted that key factors such as convenience – and efficiency may influence the purchase of seafood products. Several established studies have noted that perceived behavioural control is an important predictor that is connected to human purchase intention towards green and/or circular products (Jan, 2021; Lavuri, 2022; Rusyani et al., 2021). The role of perceived behavioural control in human action assesses purchase intention and eco-friendly behaviour towards sustainable products (Chaudhary & Bisai, 2018; Paul et al., 2016). Therefore, this study argued that perceived behavioural control may influence the circular economy and also encourage purchase intention.

2.6 Convenience

Convenience is defined as the consumer's perception of the time and effort required to complete a service or task (Saha et al., 2023). Convenience is an importance component to be considered in circular economy if marketing is to be competitive. Convenience is an extended component and a key factor from perceived behavioural control conceptualised among the TPB key factors (Ajzen, 1991). Convenience is classified as the ease and effortlessness an individual or a consumer copes with to purchase a product, or service or execute a transaction (Saha et al., 2023). Previous research recounted how consumer interest has been increasingly inconvenient (Grunert, 2006). Past studies also noted that consumers in the circular economy domain have a keen interest in a wide range of products and their availability (Jones, 2000). One-third of consumers surveyed have reported that sustainable products are difficult and challenging to find, as noted by Torjusen et al., (2004). Therefore, consumers must spend additional time searching for green products (Ogiemwonyi, 2022), most especially if the product is not made available at their convenience place (Hwang, 2015). In the context of the circular economy, Manchiraju et al. (2017) noted that organic product consumption is significantly influenced by product availability. Further, Jan (2022; 2023) emphasised on the importance of convenience on the purchase intention of circular products in many countries, highlighting its positive impact. Therefore, from the marketing perspective, convenience is proposed to have a positive impact on the purchase intention of circular products.

2.7 Environmental Impact

Environmental impact is individual sentiment and activities on the environment by creating some imbalances such as air, and water pollution on the ecosystem (Moser, 2016). Consumers involvement in sustainable behaviour is the desire to protect the environment (Jan, 2023; McCarty & Shrum, 2001). Previous studies have shown that an individual environmental impact can affect green product purchase intention (Kotchen & Reiling, 2000). The connection between environmental impact and purchase intention has been revealed in past studies (Jan, 2021; Kim & Choi, 2005). In an emerging economy, young people were found to have more interest in environmental issues and purchase intention while showing their purchasing habits towards green products (Yadav & Pathak, 2016). However, other studies also report a weak connection between consumer environmental impact and purchase intention (Joshi & Rahman, 2017). In developing nations, discussing the demand for further research between environmental impact and purchase intention towards green products is necessary (Kautish & Dash, 2017). Research has argued that a stronger environmental impact will affect green product purchase intention in a circular economy (Prakash et al., 2023). This study further argued that the connection between consumer environmental impact and purchase intention needs to be tested in the context of the circular economy.

2.8 Cause-Related Marketing

Cause-related marketing (CRM) is a firm contribution to designate a cause, and are beneficial collaboration between companies designed to promote revenue and transactions and is also linked to consumer activities (Arslanagic-Kalajdzic et al., 2022). Activities in CRM promote companies' ideas and consumers make significant purchases by adding value to consumers, charitable events, and the company itself (Lafferty et al., 2016). Buying a product from a company that designates a proportion of revenue raised to a charity, thus consumer receives the satisfaction of acknowledgement through their involvement (Demetriou et al., 2010). Therefore, companies can promote their long-term (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006), and short-term (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988) image and sales through such a process. In this study, CRM involves supporting various types of cause that includes social and environmental issues. CrM has been highlighted in many studies (Arslanagic-Kalajdzic et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2019). Building on past literature, it can be argued that there is not much research focusing on consumers' purchase intention and factors that influence their environmental cause-related purchasing decision towards green products.

3. Hypotheses

H1: Attitude has a direct relationship with purchase intention.

H2: Subjective norm has a direct relationship with green purchase intention.

H3: Perceived behavioural control has a direct relationship with purchase intention.

H4: Convenience has a direct relationship with purchase intention.

H5: Environmental impact has a direct relationship with purchase intention.

H 6: Cause-related marketing has a direct relationship with purchase intention.

4. Theoretical Model

Based on the discussions of literature, the study proposed a model presented in Figure 1. The study has six independent variables such as attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, convenience, environmental impact, and cause-related marketing. The study conceptualised purchase intention as a dependent variable.

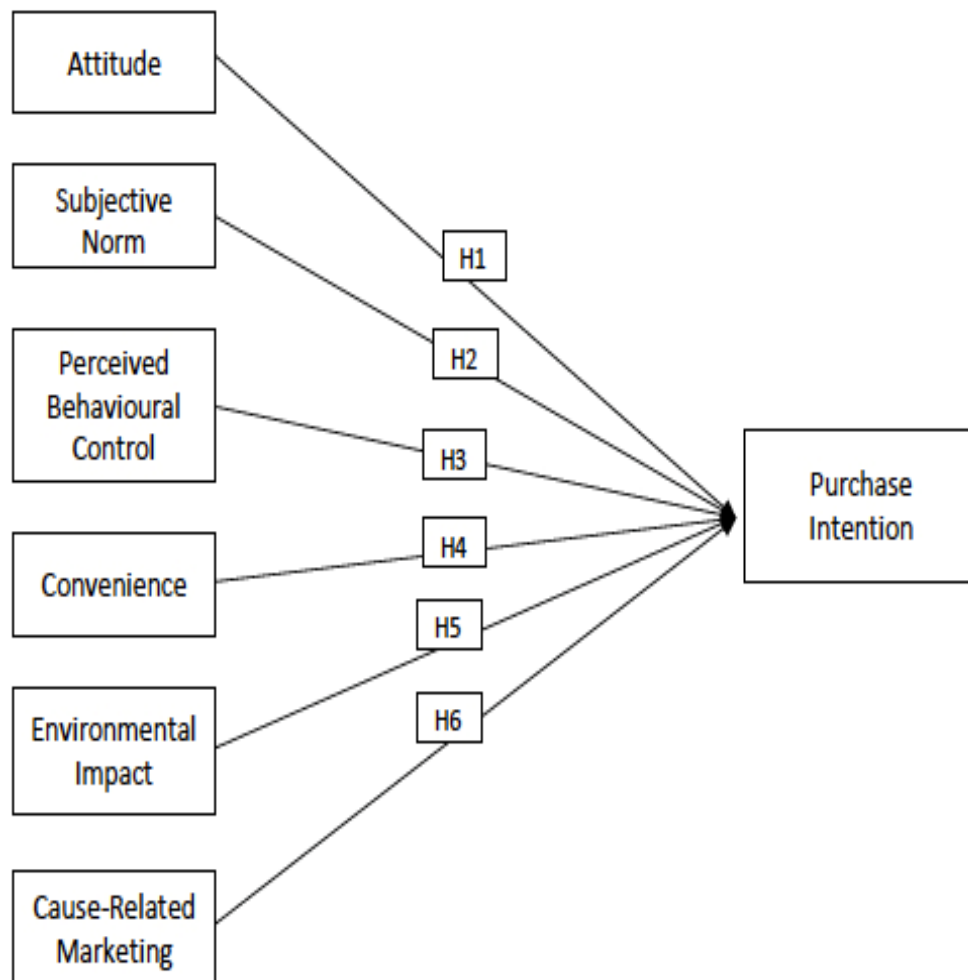


Figure 1. Research Framework.

5. Methodology

This study applied a conceptual and quantitative approach by collecting primary data from various literature indexed in different databases (Scopus, Science Direct, and Web of Science) indexed in highly ranked journals relevant to the context (Mostaghel & Chirumalla, 2021). The study opted to focus on the circular economy from a marketing perspective, sustainable marketing and consumer purchase intention. A depth literature review was conducted to understand the current theoretical analysis of marketing in the circular economy. The study applied various keywords in selecting relevant articles. Papers related to “circular economy marketing”, “sustainability”, “purchase intention”, “circular”, “circularity” and “green marketing” were selected to frame the literature. In addition, the study drew on previous research conducted within the same context. Insight from past research is essentially valuable for positioning the study with a broader theoretical framework. The integration of past studies improves the robustness and relevance of the study. Finally, all papers without a clear focus on marketing in the circular economy domain were filtered and removed.

6. Discussions and Implications

Environmental problems associated with the circular economy have made this study significant. It is important to explore consumer purchase intention from a circular economy perspective, particularly in developing countries. Consumers play a significant role in the development of a circular economy by purchasing green and

circular products. The study addressed the lack of a basic product framework related to circular products, to illustrate the role of consumers in the circular economy. The proposed model aims to provide better insights into areas where the purchase intention of products in the circular economy is low. Moreover, the model significantly contributes to the consumption side of the circular economy by identifying six levels of factors that may influence consumer purchase intention. This framework will help green marketers and environmental professionals make informed strategic decisions and create instructional vision for marketing. It will also enable managers to engage consumers more effectively towards circular consumption and direct behavior in the future. The empirical evidence on the antecedents of purchase intention will serve as a momentum for analyzing consumer purchase intention in the context of the circular economy in the future.

This study is conceptualised to gauge purchase intention by examining the direct relationship between attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, convenience, environmental impact and cause-related marketing. In future, the outcome of the findings may represent new knowledge which may significantly have practical value in promoting the circular economy business model and marketing of circular products. The literature review shows that understanding circular economy products provides more insights into product consumption which serves as a circular contribution. This paper attempts to rank all six levels of constructs on their specific contributions to circular economy. Therefore, understanding these contributions to the circular economy from the marketing perspective provides useful insights into the consumption of green products.

7. Conclusions

Consumers play a vital role in the circular economy by creating a demand for sustainable products and services. They are becoming more conscious of their own health and the environment, and are carefully evaluating products to ensure they contribute positively to the Earth. Thus, it is important for circular economy-related products and services to be readily available in the market, meeting both quality and functional requirements. The successful transition to a circular economy depends on the efforts of consumers and stakeholders alike. Consumer purchasing habits must shift towards sustainable options, and effective management is required to guide consumers towards these alternatives. By doing so, consumer attitudes, norms, perceived control, convenience, and environmental impact can all be positively influenced, ultimately increasing the lifespan and quality of products.

Although the factors proposed in this study have not yet been empirically tested, it is crucial to include them in the study due to the strong relationship they have with each other. Understanding the role of consumers towards these factors can help clarify the transitions towards a circular economy and maintain the value of products. The proposed model can be useful in measuring the contribution of consumers towards the circular economy, as well as the performance of manufacturing companies. In summary, the paper concludes that consumer activities towards purchase intention can support the circular consumption of products.

The study has a few shortcomings that need to be considered. It is based on a literature review from academic databases. To validate the theoretical model and bridge the research gap, future studies should explore evidence of circular economy consumers and their purchase intention. The model provides insights into the six-level factors that impact circularity in purchasing. More research is needed to quantify the consumer purchase intention contribution according to the developed matrix. This will help measure product circularity from a marketing perspective, by assessing the six-level factors conceptualized in the model. The proposed model aims to support circular products and promote substantial consumer behaviour towards purchase intention.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

This research was conducted under Department of Business Administration, Kulliyah of Economics grant. Project ID: DEBA23-026-0032

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