

# THE ROLE OF SOCIAL & SELF-IDENTITY FACTORS IN GREEN BUYING BEHAVIOR

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## Abstract

Consumers are becoming more aware of their environmental effect and are adopting eco-friendly activities. Concerns about the environment, such as air pollution, global warming, hazardous waste disposal, and water contamination, have increased the emphasis on responsible consuming behaviors. The adoption of green strategies by businesses is becoming increasingly important to consumers, who are interested in supporting companies that prioritize sustainability. Social identification and self-identity impact green purchasing habits. The sensation of belonging to a certain social group is referred to as social identity, whereas self-identification refers to an individual's constant self-perception. These factors affect how consumers use brands and products to create and express their sense of self to themselves and others, which can have implications for their purchasing behavior.

This thesis explores the role of social and self-identity factors in shaping green buying behavior among consumers. A deductive approach was adopted, incorporating quantitative data collection methods. The study involved a sample of 500 consumers, who completed an online survey.

The results of the study indicate that social identity factors, such as group norms and peer pressure, play a significant role in shaping green buying behavior. In addition, consumers' self-identity, such as their personal values and beliefs, also influence their willingness to engage in environmentally friendly consumption behaviors.

The study also revealed that consumers who have a stronger sense of environmental self-identity are more likely to engage in green buying behavior. However, the influence of social identity factors on green buying behavior was found to be stronger than the influence of self-identity factors.

## Keywords

Social Identity, Self-Identity, Green Buying Behavior, Social Influence, Environmental Attitude, Consumer Self-Identity, Consumer Product.

## 1. Green buying behaviours

Globalization has brought ecological problems to every living being in the world as a result of the rapid rate at which process is taking place across the globe. Over the past few years, environmental challenges have increasingly entered the public debate. ( Dutta, 2021) The world's future has now become a concern for consumers that leads to a preference for products that have a low environmental impact. The pricing, promotion, product features, and distribution activities of companies are beginning to incorporate green policies into their marketing strategies (Polonsky & Jay, 1994). Companies that use green marketing focus on protecting the environment by creating, advertising, pricing, and distributing eco-

friendly products. They aim to incorporate sustainable practices into all aspects of their business (Croning & Smith, 2010). In environmental marketing, all activities aimed at fulfilling human needs and wants are intended to reduce the adverse effects on the environment, while generating and facilitating exchanges (Zapata & Fernando, 2021). Environmentally conscious, ethically aware, and socially responsible consumers are becoming more prevalent today (Jaciow, et al., 2022).

Numerous companies are accountable for encouraging customers to strive to choose items that have a lesser environmental effect. Some of the benefits of eco marketing include:

- Green marketing promotes long-term sustainable growth and profitability.
- The initial cost is higher but long-term it saves money.
- It ensures that environmental factors are taken into account when marketing products and services. Gaining a competitive advantage and access to new markets are two benefits of it.

Environmental concerns such as climate change, pollution, and resource depletion are gaining popularity, is causing a shift in consumer behavior towards more sustainable purchasing patterns. This shift is visible in the growing demand for environmentally friendly products and services, as well as the adoption of sustainable practices such as waste reduction and recycling. In response to this trend, businesses are also adapting their practices to be more environmentally conscious and offering greener products and services. Overall, this shift towards greener purchasing patterns is a positive step towards a more sustainable future and reflects a growing desire among consumers to minimize their effects on the environment (Öztürk, 2020). Consumer behavior is increasingly shifting towards environmentally friendly purchasing patterns Reaction of increasing the recognition of environmental concerns.

Green purchasing is acquiring items and services that are intended to have a low environmental impact, such as those that preserve energy and decrease trash. By choosing green products, consumers can contribute to a more sustainable future and reduce their environmental footprint. This shift towards green purchasing is an important step in addressing many environmental challenges facing the planet (Sarumathi, 2014).

The concept of "green" emerged in the 1960s as part of the environmental movement, which sought to promote more environmentally sensitive lifestyles. Today, green marketing is a central consideration for many consumers when making purchasing decisions, and businesses that adopt green marketing strategies and market eco-friendly products and services are more likely to attract consumers who prioritize environmental sustainability (Vijayshree, et al., 2022). In the early 1970s, there was a growing recognition of the link between the environment and marketing operations. The primary goal was to incorporate environmental concepts into marketing processes and to identify environmentally sympathetic consumers who were interested in buying environmentally friendly products (Ciobanu, et al., 2022).

Purchasing decisions can be influenced by factors related to supporting environmentally friendly businesses, purchasing green products, and adopting sustainable consumer practices. Consumers may prioritize these factors when making purchasing decisions and choose products or services that align with their environmental values. This suggests that businesses that prioritize sustainability and offer green products or services may have a competitive advantage in attracting environmentally conscious consumers (Amar, et al.,

2020). The term "green" or environmentally conscious consumers, in this study, refers to individuals who actively contemplate the environmental effects of their consumption patterns and attempt to change their purchase and use habits in order to reduce their environmental footprint. This definition indicates that the study is specifically concentrate on knowing the behavior of consumers who prioritize environmental considerations in their purchasing decisions.

## 2. Social-Identity

Understanding the role of social identity ecological consumption behavior is important. Consumers learn about consumer behavior by observing and communicating with their peers, but there is not enough investigation into the impact of social learning on green consumer behavior, especially in Nepal. The social identity concept refers based on emotional and value-related interests, how individuals perceive themselves as belonging to a specific social group (Liu, et al., 2019) (Tajfel, 1978). Social identity can be based on consistent demographic classifications, as well as other prominent identifying characteristics such as religion, nationality, profession, or hobbies. It helps individuals define themselves and their place in society, and also shapes their behaviors and interactions with others (Sulphey, 2019).

Social identity, as prescribed by (Tajfel, 1978), individuals often position themselves within social groups that reflect their actual or desired self-identity; our view of who we are largely influenced by the social groupings to which we belong (Rubin & Hewstone, 2004). Peer groups are formed because of the need for a sense of belongingness, which is a fundamental aspect of human psychology and social identity strongly influences the choices we make as consumers. The innate need to belong results in most consumers having a perceived membership in a social group, which may have a substantial influence on their purchasing habits and decisions due to the influence of their social identity.

People's societal beliefs have an influence on customers' purchase decisions (Azizan & Suki, 2013). People care about others' perceptions of them based on their purchase choices. Interacting and engaging with consumers has an effect on their behavior (Doszhanov & Ahmad, 2015). Similarly, other people's perceptions of your brand and the globe are important in appraising the world. Consumers also select identical goods to demonstrate their fit. On the one hand, people value their choices since they express their individuality (Lee, 2008).

Social identity in consumers provides an opportunity to learn appropriate behaviors by observing other members of their social group, which can influence their consumption behaviors and decisions (HOGG, et al., 2004). Green Consumption is likely to be embraced by all members of a social group, even if it is accepted to some individuals, due to the fear of social sanctions for not conforming to group norms. This fear of societal sanctions can affect consumer behavior and contribute to the adoption of sustainable practices (Tsarenko, et al., 2013) (Minton & Rose, 1997). Individuals may adopt sustainable practices and engage in green consumer behavior to align with the expectations of their social group, as they strive to adhere to the standards and ideals of the group.

## 3. Self-Identity

A person's self-concept has been found to significantly influence their behavior. While a person's judgmental attitudes are separate from their self-identity, there is likely a reciprocal relationship between the two. Engaging in a behavior can create, confirm, or reinforce a person's self-identity, although this outcome may be less clear or noticeable

compared to other measurable results. For a person's behavior to be predicted accurately, their sense of self-determination must be taken into account. Previous research on self-identity has been used to study people's buying behavior. The theories of identity (Confente, Scarpi, & Russo, 2020) help us understand this concept.

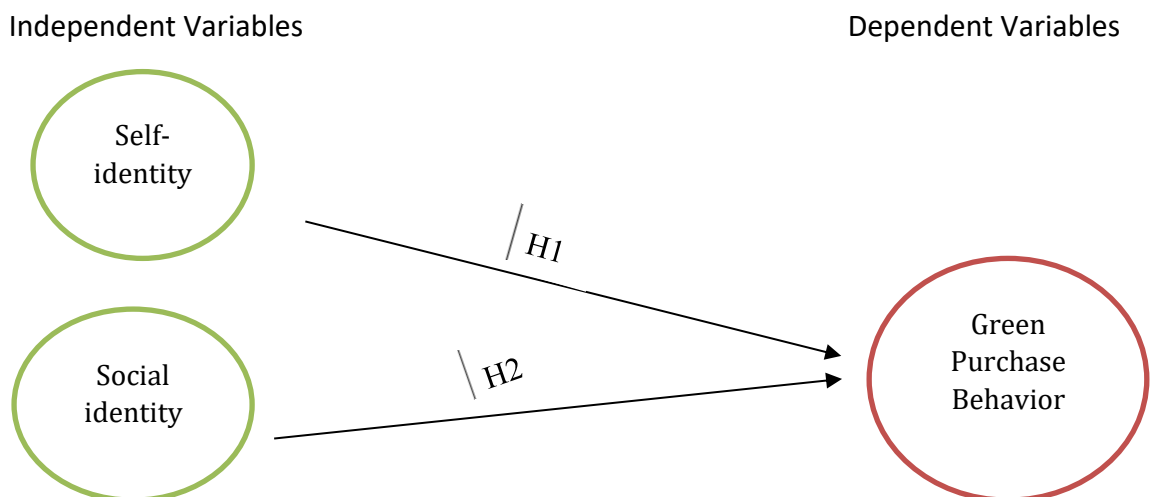
Self-identities typically represent stable and prominent aspects of an individual's self-perception, often described using labels chosen by the individual. In their study, (Werff, et al., 2013) Self-identity in an environmental context means how much a person thinks of themselves as someone who does things that are good for the environment. This aspect of their personality is important to them and doesn't change easily. It's a big part of who they are. Encouraging people to identify themselves as environmentally conscious is a good way to get them to act in environmentally friendly ways. If people see themselves as environmentalists, they probably behave in ways that supports the surrounding. Therefore, it's important to promote an environmental one to encourage pro-environmental activity. An environmental one shows how much someone sees themselves as a person who does things that are good for the environment. It is also a strong indicator of whether they will behave in pro-environmental ways.

Researchers in psychology and sociology have established a strong relationship between self-identity and conduct. According to the research on environmental behavior, self-identity is related to the intention to purchase eco-friendly items. Self-identity is rooted in identity theory, which clarifies how an individual's actions are consistent with their societal role. Identity theory proposes that People's conduct is impacted by factors other than their decisions but also by social norms and structures. As a result, individuals often act in accordance with their social network and societal role.

The relationship between role identity and behavioral goals may be explained using identity theory, which applies to many different types of behaviors (Charng, et al., 1988). Identity theory views roles as specific characteristic behaviors that people adopt in various social situations, based on their social identity and the expectations of others in those conditions (Samarasinghe & Ahsan, 2014).

### 3.1 Theoretical framework

The relationship between social identity, self-identification, and green purchasing behavior is significant. Social identity elements are intimately related to social influence and environmental awareness. After conducting the literature review, the subsequent theoretical framework was formulated:



### Fig 1: Conceptual Framework showing different variables for green buying behavior

The process starts with green purchasing behavior as the key factor, followed by two variables: green purchasing behavior and consumer products. Self-identity and social identity are depicted as separate independent variables in the framework.

This study utilized self-administered standardized questionnaires the objective was to examine the factors that affect consumers' inclination to purchase eco-friendly products, drawing from the theoretical framework outlined earlier. The outcomes of this chapter can help businesses in developing effective marketing strategies and assist departments in encouraging customers to engage in environmental conservation. Moreover, the study intended to assess the dependability of the empirical results.

#### 4. Summarized results based on the Hypothesis

The hypothesis testing findings are summarized in the table below:

Developed Hypothesis	P-value	Impact	Developed Hypothesis
There is a significant and positive relationship between self-identity and green buying behavior.	0.00	Positive impacted	supported
There is a significant and positive relationship between social identity and green buying behavior.	0.00	Positive impacted	supported

Table 1: Summarized results based on the Hypothesis

According to the findings, consumers' self-identity has a significant beneficial influence on their green shopping behavior. This suggests that consumers who identify as environmentally concerned are more likely to make green purchasing decisions. The study's findings give substantial evidence to support this theory.

The study discovered that there is a positive relation between social identity and green buying behavior, with a p-value of 0.00. This supports the hypothesis that social identity can influence a person's decision to buy environmentally friendly products or services.

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