DIJEMSS:
Dinasti International Journal of Education Management and Social Science
E-ISSN: 2686-6331
P-ISSN: 2686-6358
https://dinastipub.org/DIJEMSS dinasti.info@gmail.com +62 811 7404 455
DINASTI PUBLISHER
DOI: https://doi.org/10.38035/dijemss.v6i6

Decoding Gen Z's Green Purchases: The Role of Product Attributes and Environmental Awareness

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Abstract: Although Indonesian Generation Z demonstrates strong commitment to climate change mitigation, their actual green behavior remains limited. This study examines the influence of product attributes on green purchasing behavior, with environmental awareness as a mediating variable. Data were collected from 113 respondents representing Generation Z in Indonesia and analyzed PLS-SEM using SmartPLS 4. Findings indicate that product attributes positively influence environmental awareness, but environmental awareness does not directly or indirectly affect green purchasing decisions. Factors such as green product characteristics, ecological sensitivity, and environmental concern were found to shape sustainable purchasing behaviors among Indonesian Gen Z. Theoretically, this research expands the understanding of green consumption patterns and clarifies the conceptual link between product attributes and environmental awareness in the Indonesian youth context. Practically, the study offers managerial insights and actionable recommendations to encourage green purchasing in this demographic.

Keyword: Product Attributes, Environmental Attitude, Ecological Affection, Environmental Concern, Green Purchase Behavior

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is the largest generational group in Indonesia. They account for 27.94% of the national population, or about 74.93 million people. Their demographic presence surpasses that of the Millennial generation, which forms the second-largest group with 25.87% of the population, or around 69.38 million individuals. The eldest members of Generation Z have now entered the workforce and begun to establish their own families, marking key life milestones that traditionally symbolize stability and maturity on an individual's life journey. Nonetheless, these significant life events are now shrouded in uncertainty, stemming from concerns about personal health, well-being, and the prevailing job and economic insecurity brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. This context offers an

intriguing perspective on the values and norms that Generation Z continues to uphold while navigating the quest for stability amidst such turbulent times (Utomo & Heriyanto, 2022).

According to Indonesia Gen-Z Report 2022, Indonesian Generation Z exhibits a profound dedication to the mitigation of climate change, with a substantial 70 percent of this demographic perceiving a personal responsibility for alleviating the ramifications of climate change. Additionally, an impressive 66 percent of Generation Z respondents display a willingness to allocate supplementary financial resources towards the acquisition of environmentally sustainable products. These statistics serve as a compelling indication of the emergence of a novel cohort of socially and environmentally conscientious consumers, whose economic preferences are progressively influenced by climate-related factors (Utomo & Heriyanto, 2022).

Generation Z possesses distinctive traits that differentiate them from Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, particularly regarding their consumption patterns (Ham et al., 2022). They are often recognized as the most environmentally conscious and sustainability-oriented generation, earning the nickname "Generation Green" (Bloomberg News, 2020). As noted by Pelikánová & Hála (2021), purchasing and consumption decisions among Generation Z when it comes to eco-friendly products are evaluated from various perspectives, including economic, legal, and ethical considerations. However, Shwetha (2019) pointed out that while Gen Z's interest in green products is driven by their attention to renewable energy and sustainable practices, this trend cannot yet be generalized across the entire generation. This is due to opposing behaviors still present among youth, such as significant food wastage and a lack of consistent environmentally friendly consumption habits (Kymäläinen et al., 2021).

From a marketing perspective, any biases, or misconceptions, such as the notion that only Gen Z is concerned about environmental issues, need to be carefully reconsidered to enable the appropriate adjustment and reallocation of marketing resources. However, the presence of conflicting reports complicates the decision-making process for marketers who are seeking to determine which generation(s) to invest their marketing resources in (Ham et al., 2022). Marketers and advertisers are seizing this market opportunity by developing more eco-friendly products, strengthening their green marketing initiatives, and building an environmentally responsible image for their brands. They are particularly targeting Gen Z by emphasizing how their products or brands contribute positively to a sustainable world, which has become an essential component of any genuine value proposition.

According to Sharma & Foropon (2019), product attributes play a significant role in shaping consumer decisions when it comes to purchasing eco-friendly products. Unlike conventional products, green products possess unique characteristics—such as recyclability, durability, biodegradability, renewability, low emissions, local sourcing, and energy efficiency—that can impact both consumers' purchase intentions and their actual buying behavior. In this study, the main question revolves around determining whether consumers are driven to buy green products primarily because of these product attributes, or instead due to factors related to environmental awareness, including environmental attitudes, ecological sensitivity, and concern for environmental issues.

In the context of the growing consumption of environmentally friendly products in Indonesia, this study addresses a research gap by empirically investigating the profound impacts and underlying mechanisms of green product attributes on green purchasing behavior, specifically within the perspective of the Indonesian Generation Z. This study makes several key contributions, summarized as follows: (a) it provides initial evidence of how Indonesia's Generation Z contributes to expanding the theoretical understanding of the link between green behavior and generational theory; (b) it clearly differentiates green product attributes, various aspects of environmental awareness, and how these elements interact to shape green purchasing behavior; and (c) it enriches existing literature by examining the relationship between green product attributes, environmental awareness, and green purchase behavior, specifically within the context of Generation Z in Indonesia. In the following sections, we outline the theoretical

foundation and relevant hypotheses. A survey study was then conducted to test these hypotheses and empirically validate the proposed conceptual framework. Finally, we present the findings, compare them with previous research, and discuss the study's limitations and possible directions for future research.

In the fields of marketing and consumer behavior studies, product attributes serve as qualifying factors for products and play a pivotal role in influencing product selection within the consumer decision-making process. This is because consumers employ these attributes as evaluation criteria to assess and judge among different purchasing options (De Medeiros et al., 2016). Despite numerous studies and reviews conducted over recent years on topics related to green products and their consumption, the existing literature has thus far been deficient in presenting a systematic endeavor to analyze green product attributes and establish their connection with consumer emotions (Marcon et al., 2022). Certain scholars argue that emotional green appeals significantly impact customers' purchase intentions, as these appeals are designed to align with individuals' specific emotional needs (Tih et al., 2016).

Green products have shown a higher likelihood of being chosen by individuals who possess a deeper understanding of environmental challenges and potential solutions (Albayrak et al., 2013). If individuals tend to feel a higher level of green product attributes, then it can be said that product attributes will contribute positively to environmental awareness. More specifically, environmental attitude signifies a cognitive inclination characterized by the evaluative process of nature, entailing a degree of favor or disfavor. Environmental concern, on the other hand, is closely tied to an individual's core values related to environmental issues (Stern et al., 1995). Consumers with a favorable attitude toward environmental concerns are generally more inclined to purchase eco-friendly products (Nam et al., 2017). Therefore, to examine the influence of product attributes on environmental awareness, the following hypotheses are proposed, based on the preceding discussion:

H1: Product attributes have a positive impact on environmental attitude
H2: Product attributes have a positive impact on ecological affection
H3: Product attributes have a positive impact on environmental concern

Research in social psychology highlights that attitudes play a significant role in predicting human behavior. Numerous studies have specifically examined how environmental attitudes relate to environmentally responsible actions. In previous research, consumer attitudes have often been utilized to forecast behaviors such as energy-saving practices and the environmentally conscious purchase and use of products. Generally, findings indicate a close link between individuals' environmental attitudes and their engagement in ecological behaviors (Mostafa, 2007). Environmental attitudes (EA) represent a pivotal concept within the field of environmental psychology, denoting a psychological inclination manifested through the evaluation of the natural environment with varying degrees of favorability or unfavorability (Milfont & Duckitt, 2010).

According to Ameena (2022), consumers with a positive attitude toward the environment are generally more inclined to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors. Previous studies have also indicated that environmental attitudes directly influence consumers' intention to purchase green products and have a strong impact on their buying decisions (Djajadiwangsa & Yeshika, 2022). Consumers tend to have a strong environmental attitude while they have a proper information about green products' attribute. Eco-friendly product features are closely linked to consumers' awareness of environmental issues, including resource conservation and related concerns. Furthermore, Song et al. (2020) confirmed that the purchasing behavior of Generation Z consumers in China is influenced and shaped by their environmental attitudes. Based the explanation above, we propose the following hypotheses, grounded in the aforementioned discourse:

H4: Environmental attitude have a positive impact on green purchase behavior

Individuals often experience a strong emotional bond with the environment, even without having extensive knowledge about it. This emotional attachment stems from the feelings and responses that certain objects or surroundings evoke in a person. According to Arnold & Reynolds (2009), research exploring the emotional dimension has offered valuable insights into understanding how affection influences consumer behavior, revealing that mood, feelings, and emotions are connected to nearly every aspect of purchasing activities. This connection is especially clear in retail settings, where mood has often been the focus of studies examining environmental impacts on consumption. In this context, ecological affection (EA) has been examined to assess whether a relationship exists between these emotional factors and the purchasing behavior of eco-friendly products (Helenita et al., 2013).

Song et al. (2020) suggest that young consumers' awareness and concern regarding environmental problems can evoke emotional responses that motivate them to contribute to a more sustainable environment. Additionally, ecological affection has been found to have a direct positive effect on consumers' purchasing decisions. Other studies also indicate that ecological affection encourages consumers to engage in environmentally friendly shopping behaviors (Ameena, 2022). On the other hand, Djajadiwangsa & Yeshika (2022) found that ecological affection positively affected Gen Z behavior to purchase green product. Meanwhile, several prior studies have identified a strong relationship between ecological affection and purchasing behavior (Chan & Lau, 2000;Kanchanapibul et al., 2014). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H5: Ecological affection have a positive impact on green purchase behavior

Environmental concern is often evident in consumers' behaviors, influencing their choices of products, information-seeking activities, and participation in recycling and diversity-related practices. Consumers who demonstrate such awareness and care for environmental issues are commonly referred to as "green" consumers (Ameena, 2022). Previous research has shown that environmental concern positively shapes consumers' attitudes toward eco-friendly products (Mostafa, 2007), which subsequently affects their green purchasing decisions, suggesting a direct relationship between environmental concern and green purchase behavior (Yadav, 2016). However, some studies present differing perspectives, arguing that environmental concern does not necessarily have a direct impact on green purchasing behavior (Chaudhary & Bisai, 2018; Pham et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2020). Furthermore, Song et al. (2020) stated that green product attribute significally influence the environmental attitude, ecological affection, and environmental concern, which in turn will lead to Gen Z green purchase behavior in China. Meanwhile, Djajadiwangsa & Yeshika (2022) found that green product attributes do not influence the environmental awareness construct. Additionally, environmental attitude and environmental concern were found to have no significant effect on Gen Z's green purchase behavior in Indonesia. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Environmental concern have a positive impact on green purchase behavior

H7: Product attribute have a positive impact on green purchase behavior

METHOD

This research adopts an explanatory approach to examine the causal relationships among variables. The target population of this study comprises Generation Z individuals residing in Pontianak, aged 17 years and above. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants according to specific predetermined criteria: they must have purchased green products within the past six months, with product categories including household items, cosmetics, electronic devices, vehicles, or other eco-friendly products.

Data collection was conducted over approximately six months, from June to December 2022, through questionnaire distribution targeting eligible Gen Z respondents in Pontianak. The sample size was determined based on Hair et al. (2019), suggesting a minimum sample of 70

respondents, calculated by multiplying the number of structural paths by ten. This study successfully collected data from 113 respondents, exceeding the recommended minimum.

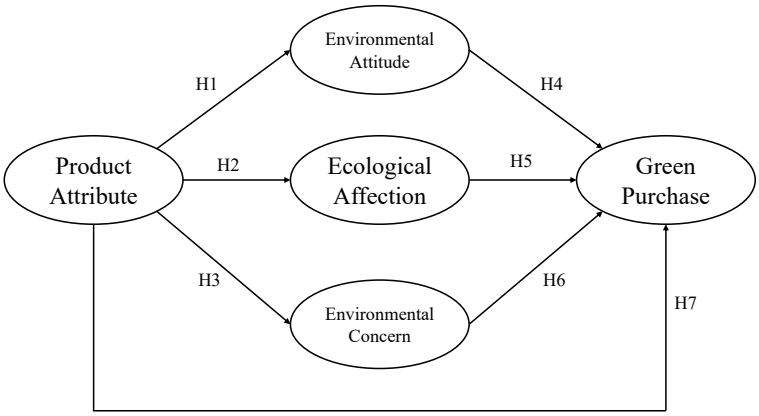

Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

All measurement instruments used were adapted from previously validated and reliable scales. Participants were asked to respond to items using a five-point Likert scale. For data analysis, this study employed the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique using Partial Least Squares (PLS). Following Hair et al. (2019), PLS was selected due to its suitability for small sample sizes and complex model structures. The PLS-SEM procedure involves two sub-models: the measurement model, which illustrates how observed variables represent latent constructs, and the structural model, which assesses the relationships between latent constructs. Data analysis was carried out using SmartPLS 4 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The assessment of the measurement model using reflective indicators involves evaluating convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability through composite reliability. Convergent validity is assessed by examining the factor loadings, which should exceed 0.7, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which should be above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019). As shown in Table 1, the results of the convergent validity evaluation indicate that all variables in this study meet the established criteria for convergent validity.

Table 1. Convergent Validity Testing Results

Variables	Number of Items	Convergent Validity		Conclusion
		Loading Factor	AVE	
Product Attributes	3	0.742 – 0.834	0.648	Valid
Environmental Attitudes	3	0.741 – 0.848	0.610	Valid
Ecological Affection	3	0.735 – 0.853	0.663	Valid
Environmental Concern	3	0.765 – 0.873	0.652	Valid
Green Purchase Behavior	4	0.750 – 0.857	0.679	Valid

Discriminant validity refers to the principle that distinct constructs should not exhibit high correlations with one another. This validity is considered established when the square root of the AVE exceeds the correlations with other constructs (Hair et al., 2019). Based on the results presented in Table 2, it can be concluded that the variables in the research model satisfy the discriminant validity criteria.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Testing Results

	PA	EA	ECO	EC	GPB	Conclusion
PA	**0.805**					Valid
EA	0.483	**0.781**				Valid
ECO	0.558	0.462	**0.814**			Valid
EC	0.480	0.556	0.396	**0.808**		Valid
GPB	0.581	0.480	0.621	0.582	**0.824**	Valid

The subsequent step in evaluating the measurement model involves assessing composite reliability to determine the reliability of the variables under study. This test is conducted to confirm the accuracy, consistency, and precision of the measurement instruments used. In the context of SEM-PLS analysis, composite reliability is employed, with a threshold value of 0.7 or higher indicating that a variable meets the reliability standard (Hair et al., 2019). As presented in Table 3, the results show that all variables meet the required reliability criteria, with composite reliability values exceeding 0.7.

Table 3. Composite Reliability Testing Results

Variables	Composite Reliability	Conclusion
Product Attributes	0.725	Reliable
Environmental Attitudes	0.682	Reliable
Ecological Affection	0.773	Reliable
Environmental Concern	0.744	Reliable
Green Purchase Behavior	0.844	Reliable

After evaluating the measurement model, the next step is to assess the structural model to determine the strength of the relationships between the latent variables or constructs. This evaluation primarily examines the coefficient of determination (R^2) and the path coefficients. In behavioral research, R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are typically interpreted as indicating substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively (Hair et al., 2019). The coefficient determination test results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Coefficient Determination (R^2)

Dependent Variable	Independen Variable	R Squared (R^2)	Level of Prediction
EA	PA	0.233	Weak
Eco	PA	0.230	Weak
EC	PA	0.311	Weak
GPB	EA, Eco, EC, PA	0.549	Moderate

Based on Table 4, the coefficient determination score of environmental attitude is 0.233 which means that the proportion of product attribute in explaining environmental attitude is 23.3%. In the interim, the coefficients determination for the ecological affection and environmental concern are 0.230 and 0.311. This implies that the percentage of attribute product explaining each of them is 23% and 31.1%, respectively. All coefficients determination are less than 0.50, indicating that the level of prediction accuracy is weak. Moreover, the green purchase behavior is explained by product attributes, environmental attitude, ecological affection, and environmental concern, with R^2 value of 0.549 it falls within the moderate level of prediction. In other words, all independent variables collectively account for 54.9% of the variance in green purchasing behavior.

Tabel 5 provides the information of hypothesis testing results. Based on the table below, it is evident that hypothesis H4 is not supported. In contrast, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H5, H6, and H7 are supported, as indicated by p-values less than 0.05 and 0.01, meeting the criteria for hypothesis acceptance. The result of full model analysis is shown in Figure 2.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis		Path Coefficient	p-value	Hypothesis Decision
H1	PA → EA	0.483	0.000	Supported
H2	PA → Eco	0.480	0.000	Supported
H3	PA → EC	0.558	0.000	Supported
H4	EA→ GPB	0.034	0.709	Not Supported
H5	Eco → GPB	0.320	0.001	Supported
H6	EC → GPB	0.362	0.000	Supported
H7	PA → GPB	0.209	0.010	Supported

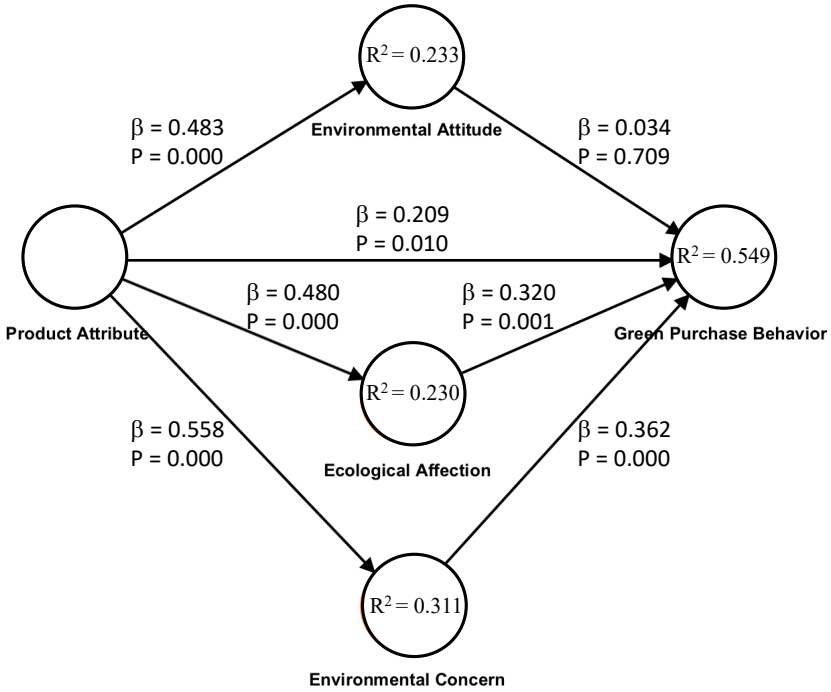

Figure 2. The Results of Full Model Analysis

In this study, product attributes are found to be able to predict environmental awareness, including environmental attitude, ecological affection, and environmental concern. The findings confirm that green product attributes are useful indicators for communicating with Indonesian Gen Z consumers about environmentally friendly products. about environmentally friendly products and environmental awareness. The investigation into environmental awareness considers ecological affection as a principal thread, acknowledged for its utility in guiding consumer behavior. However, research on its determinants, particularly in the context of green product purchases, remains limited. Our findings reveal a significant influence of Indonesian Gen Z consumers' pro-environmental concerns on ecological affection, suggesting that emotions of these consumers may be influenced by their perception of individual roles in environmental development. This finding were also supported by the previous studies, such as Song et al. (2020) who highlighted the critical role of ecological affection in shaping the environmental awareness of Chinese Gen Z consumers. The results of hypothesis testing further

demonstrated a strong relationship between ecological affection and their green purchasing behavior (Chan & Lau, 2000; Djajadiwangsa & Yeshika, 2022; Kanchanapibul et al., 2014). This implies that ecological affection is more closely associated with emotions arising from environmental stimuli, representing a higher level of human cognition.

The attitudes and concerns about environmental issues may trigger emotional reflections among young consumers, contributing to efforts aimed at improving the environment sustainably. According to statistical value, H4 is not supported, which elucidates that environmental attitude does not influence green purchase behavior among Indonesian Gen Z. This outcome is contrary to previous research findings (Song et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Djajadiwangsa & Yeshika (2022) and Sharma & Foropon (2019) reaffirms that environmental attitudes do not influence green purchase behavior. Thus, it can be explained that the green purchase behavior of Indonesian Gen Z may be influenced by other factors, such as knowledge, habit, past experience, etc.

The author not only investigated the direct effects among variables but also conducted an analysis of indirect effects. The analysis results reveal that the environmental attitude does not serve as a mediator in the relationship between product attributes and green purchase behavior, as evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.016 and a p-value of 0.724. In contrast, ecological affection has been identified as a mediator in the association between product attributes and green purchase behavior, demonstrating a path coefficient of 0.153 and a p-value of 0.003. Additionally, environmental concern has been shown to mediate the relationship between product attributes and green purchase behavior, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.202 and a p-value of 0.000. Finally, ecological affection and environmental concern are substantial predictors of green product purchases. Both significantly influence green purchase behavior among Indonesian Gen Z, both directly and indirectly. The outcomes of the indirect relationship assessments among variables are detailed in Table 6.

Table 6. Indirect Effect Testing Results

Indirect Effects	Path Coefficient	p-value
PA → EAtt → GPB	0.016	0.724
PA → Eco → GPB	0.153	0.003
PA → EC → GPB	0.202	0.000

CONCLUSION

This research examines the structural mechanism through which green product attributes influence green purchase behavior among Indonesian Gen Z consumers. among Indonesian Gen Z consumers. Considering to the research findings, it is evident that green product attributes exert a significant influence on environmental awareness, ultimately shaping the purchasing behavior of Indonesian Generation Z consumers. Gen-Z in Indonesia have a high sensitivity to environmental issues and good knowledge of product attributes and their functions. They believe the actions they take will represent who they are.

This study delves into the intricate structural processes governing the impact of green product attributes on green purchase behavior among Indonesian Generation Z consumers. The findings presented above underscore that green product attributes wield a significant influence on environmental awareness, subsequently shaping the purchasing behavior of Indonesian Generation Z consumers. In terms of theoretical implications, the present study advances several facets. Initially, our results unveil the pivotal role of product attributes in shaping environmental consciousness and its impact on green product purchases within the Gen Z demographic. This extends the existing understanding of how product attributes can effectively communicate the appeal of environmentally friendly products to young adult Indonesian consumers.

Secondly, environmental awareness, a fundamental predictor in comprehending consumers' green purchasing decisions, has been a subject of extensive discussion and study over time. However, its internal structure and effectiveness remain subjects of debate. This study examines environmental awareness by focusing on its three core components: environmental attitude, ecological affection, and environmental concern. Our findings reveal that Indonesian Gen Z consumers engage in green purchasing behavior driven by ecological affection and environmental concern. Meanwhile, environmental attitude is proven to have no significant influence on green purchase behavior, whether directly or indirectly. In essence, the purchasing behavior of young consumers appears to be more directly influenced by ecological affection and environmental concern. This discovery contributes to a nuanced understanding of environmental awareness and may enhance the efficacy of environmental awareness within the framework of generational theory.

Concerning managerial implications, it is advisable for governments and organizations to incorporate and emphasize individual images and influences when formulating product attributes. Indonesian Generation Z consumers are inclined to perceive product attributes with clear environmental cues, enhancing their environmental awareness. Additionally, companies and corporations should contemplate promoting environmentally friendly design and incorporating more green manufacturing technologies as distinctive product attributes.

This study has certain limitations related to its sampling approach. While the sample predominantly consisted of female Gen Z individuals from Indonesia, the limitation is not solely due to the gender imbalance. Rather, it lies in the tendency of female participants to exhibit stronger concern for consumption activities, particularly regarding environmentally friendly products a pattern supported by prior research. Although Song et al. (2020) suggested that gender differences might not significantly affect environmentally related reactions, the overrepresentation of females in this study could have influenced the findings, given women's generally higher engagement in sustainable consumption behaviors. Future studies should include more balanced samples and consider gender-related behavioral tendencies to provide broader insights into green purchasing decisions.

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