

Research Paper

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

Prof. Ritu Sharma¹, Arti Kaushik^{2*}

ABSTRACT

As environmental awareness grows, so does the risk of deceptive marketing in sustainable retailing. Malevolent creativity manifests in the form of deceptive marketing strategies like greenwashing, where businesses mislead consumers about their products' environmental impact to gain commercial advantage, in the name of sustainable retailing. The present study aims to explore the effect of morality, and consumer decision-making styles on consumer susceptible purchase responses when confronted with deceptive marketing techniques in sustainable retailing, and explores gender and locality-based differences in consumer purchase responses towards misleading marketing tactics among university students. Data acquisition involved a two-phase approach, wherein a preliminary questionnaire was administered to screen a relevant sample, followed by purposive sampling to collect data from 152 university going adults utilizing the Decision Style Questionnaire, the Moral Identity Questionnaire, and a self-constructed survey assessing Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Marketing Practices through their purchase responses. The data was analysed and the conclusion was drawn using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results of this study revealed a significant impact of both morality and decision-making styles on consumer purchase response to deceptive marketing practices. This study emphasizes the significance of transparency and responsible consumer choices to promote consumer satisfaction by mitigating the impact of deceptive marketing.

Keywords: *Malevolent Creativity, Deceptive Marketing Practices, Morality, Decision Making Styles and Consumer Response*

In today's scenario, consumers are increasingly confronted with products and advertisements that are not only appealing but also raise ethical challenges. The growing focus on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals has increased the worldwide acceptance of sustainable and responsible consumerism (Vikuk et al., 2021; Patowary, 2020; Gillani & Kutaula, 2018); resulting in a significant surge in the demand for sustainable alternatives among consumers, prompting businesses to increasingly exhibit an environmentally conscious image in this evolving marketplace (Kudlak, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

¹Professor, School of Social Sciences, Indra Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi

²Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Central University of Haryana, Haryana

*Corresponding Author

Received: December 19, 2024; Revision Received: December 28, 2024; Accepted: December 31, 2024

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

Nowadays, companies are not solely judged by their ability to generate profit; but are also evaluated based on their commitment to social and environmental well-being. Unfortunately, this has created a favorable environment for companies to manifest their ‘malevolent creativity’ — a concept rooted in strategic manipulation and intentional deception — in the form of deceptive marketing strategies that employ subtle, and complex strategies such as ambiguous language, vague claims, and misleading sustainable images. One such deceptive marketing strategy is ‘greenwashing’, where companies purposefully exaggerate or fabricate irrelevant environmental credentials to mask their inadequate sustainability initiatives (Hameed et al., 2021a; Akturan, 2018). The persistence of such tactics by businesses exploits consumer vulnerabilities and ultimately influences their purchasing decisions, diverting attention from their potentially detrimental environmental practices. These misleading tactics foster confusion and misconceptions regarding the true nature of sustainability and raise concerns about consumer trust and vulnerability (Akturan, 2019; Braga et al., 2019; Berrone et al., 2017).

Decision-Making Styles and Susceptibility towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy:

Decision-making styles can be defined as a set of inherent habits that an individual exhibits when encountered with a situation requiring a decision (Bavolar J., 2023). Research has demonstrated that these styles are associated with a variety of behaviours and attitudes, such as life choices (Lewis et al., 2023; Savioni et al., 2023), consumer habits (Abdel Wahab et al., 2023; Juárez-Varón et al., 2023), and cultural differences (Brockinton et al., 2022; Winskel et al., 2020). According to Scott & Bruce (1995), decision-making styles can be classified into five types: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. Intuitive decision-makers are generally inclined to attend to each detail precisely. They tend to emphasize their gut feeling more, which leads them to get easily swayed by positive associations in their surroundings. Spontaneous decision-making involves choices based on a sense of urgency or scarcity, leading decision-makers to thoughtlessly reach the conclusion, whereas vigilant decision-makers pursue logical evaluation of each choice through information gathering, assimilation, and assessment before reaching a conclusion, and it is considered synonymous with rational decision-making style. Dependent style characterizes dependence on others for guidance and directions while making a decision; on the other hand, avoidant decision-makers try to avoid the decision-making opportunities whenever the situation demands it.

Mann et al. (1997) has also proposed styles of decision-making on the basis of the conflict theory of decision-making, including one adaptive style (i.e., vigilance) and three non-adaptive styles (i.e., hypervigilance, buck-passing, and procrastination). Leykin and DeRubeis (2010) also proposed types of decision-making styles by adding the abovementioned styles along with some new styles, e.g., anxious or brooding styles, and suggested the combination as the Decision Styles questionnaire. The anxious style characterizes decision-making with an associated negative effect, capturing aspects of impulsivity, whereas the brooding style encompasses a tendency to overthink, leading to uninformed choices. Sprotles and Kendall (1986) discussed decision-making style in the context of the consumer as the cognitive inclination towards a certain buying behaviour, ranging from basic decision-making style while purchasing any product, which ranges from choice based on rational purchasing, brand consciousness, price awareness, quality considerations, and other factors. Therefore, it can be suggested that consumers exhibit a diverse range of decision-making styles, each influencing their purchasing intentions or behaviour (Kumar et al., 2022). This study attempts to explore the influence of various

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

decision-making styles on the consumers' purchase response to deceptive marketing tactics, particularly greenwashing.

Morality and Susceptibility towards Deceptive Marketing:

In this era of modern marketing, both consumers and advertisers face a multifaceted dilemma. Advertisers often employ deceptive strategies to influence consumers' purchasing decisions, requiring consumers to rely on their moral and ethical frameworks. Alsaad (2021) suggests that the degree of moral certainty consumers possess affects the relationship between ethical judgment, behavioural intention, and actual behaviour, emphasizing the importance of individual moral reasoning in addressing these challenges. According to Martinez and Jaeger (2016), consumers' moral reasoning and judgments significantly impact their decision-making which eventually influences their purchase response. Additionally, it's been confirmed that moral emotions affect both moral judgment and counterfeit purchase intention. Research also reveals that consumers' will to purchase sustainable products largely depends on moral judgment and moral intensity, which shows that morality significantly influences consumers' purchase intentions towards sustainable products (Liu et al., 2020; Mortimer et al., 2020; Zou et al., 2019).

To date, previous literature has primarily examined the impact of decision-making in purchase intention, mostly from a corporate perspective. However, there is a dearth of studies exploring different decision-making styles in relation to consumer purchase response. While, the literature has revealed a strong relationship between environmental safety issues and moral factors, and has demonstrated the impact of corporate moral considerations on consumers' green purchase intentions (Luttrell et al., 2021), the influence of consumer moral identity in mitigating the impact of deceptive marketing strategies also remains undetermined. Moreover, the effect of morality and decision-making styles on consumers' susceptible purchase response in regard to prevalent deceptive strategies in sustainable marketing is yet to be investigated more. The present research aims to bridge this in literature by investigating the complex relationship between deceptive marketing strategies, morality and consumer purchase response towards deceptive marketing strategy, with a particular focus on how moral reasoning and different decision-making styles influence consumer purchase behaviour toward such strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Aim: The present research aims to study *the effect of Morality, and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing among university going adults.*

Objectives

- To assess and compare the Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing among university going adults based on their gender.
- To assess and compare the Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing among university going adults based on their locality.
- To examine the relationship between Morality and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

- To determine the relationship between different Decision-Making Styles and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.
- To study the effect of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.

Hypotheses

In the light of the theoretical perspective and review of literature, **the following hypotheses have been formulated for the present study:**

- **H₁** There would be a significant difference in the Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing among university going adults based on their gender.
- **H₂** There would be a significant difference in the Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing among university going adults based on their locality.
- **H₃** There would be a significant positive relationship between Morality and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.
- **H₄** There would be a significant relationship between Decision-Making Styles and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.
- **H_{4.1}** There would be no significant relationship between Intuitive decision- making style and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.
- **H_{4.2}** There would be no significant relationship between Vigilant decision- making style and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.
- **H_{4.3}** There would be no significant relationship between Spontaneous decision- making style and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.
- **H_{4.4}** There would be no significant relationship between Dependent decision- making style and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.
- **H_{4.5}** There would be no significant relationship between Anxious decision- making style and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.
- **H_{4.6}** There would be no significant relationship between Brooding decision- making style and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.
- **H_{4.7}** There would be no significant relationship between Avoidant decision- making style and Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.
- **H₅** There would be a significant effect of Morality, and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Purchase Response towards Deceptive Marketing Strategy in Sustainable Retailing.

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

Procedure & Participants

To gain deeper insights into the green consumer behaviour among university-going adults, a survey was conducted targeting Indian students with a basic understanding of eco-friendly products and advertising. Using purposive sampling, the aim was to gather data representative of this specific consumer segment. A combination of online and paper-based questionnaires was used to reach potential participants. In addition to their responses, basic demographic details such as gender and locality were collected. Online surveys, powered by Google Forms, were distributed through social media and relevant online green communities to ensure a wider audience. Additionally, paper-based questionnaires were administered to students at the Central University of Haryana in Mahendergarh district, India.

From an initial pool of 214 willing participants, a screening process is employed based on preliminary questions regarding participants' frequency and Intention of using green products including:

- Do you actively seek out and purchase products that are labelled as environmentally friendly or "green"?
- Do you ever consider the environmental impact of a product before making a purchase?
- Do you actively follow or engage with information related to environmental sustainability and green living?

This process ensured that the final sample of 152 participants accurately represented the target audience of Indian green consumers.

Measures

The study employed the Decision Styles Questionnaire (DSQ) developed by Leykin and DeRubeis (2010) to evaluate how consumers of eco-friendly products make their purchasing decisions, the Moral Identity Questionnaire (MIQ) developed by Blacks and Reynolds (2016) to measure the importance people gave both to their moral principles and to acting accordingly, independently of religious or political views, and a self-constructed survey comprising 10 statements was administered to assess consumer purchase responses towards deceptive marketing strategies i.e. consumers' susceptibility towards misleading claims particularly in context to sustainable retailing also known as greenwashing tactics.

The DSQ is a self-report measure of decision-making style containing 43 items categorized into seven subscales, including Intuitive, Spontaneous, Vigilant, Dependent, Anxious, Brooding, and Avoidant. Participants rate their agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale, ranging from "never" (1) to "always" (5), to indicate how well each statement reflects their typical decision-making style for making important decisions. The internal consistency of these subscales ranged from 0.68 to 0.93 in the original study.

The MIQ 20-item MIQ consisted of a 12-item Moral Integrity subscale and an 8-item Moral Self subscale. Participants rate their agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'. The Total MIQ had high internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$). Test-retest reliability for Total MIQ scores was $r = .87$.

A self-constructed survey titled "Consumer Purchase Response Survey (CPR)" was developed to explore consumer purchase responses toward environmentally friendly marketing messages, specifically focusing on their susceptibility to greenwashing tactics i.e.

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

a type of deceptive marketing strategy in sustainable retailing. The content validity of this survey questionnaire was established by expert reviews. This survey comprised ten statements rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. By gathering self-reported information about their purchasing responses, the survey aimed to explore the following subthemes:

- **Awareness and Knowledge of Green Marketing** (2 statements)
- **Product Selection Criteria** (2 statements)
- **Environmental Claims Evaluation** (2 statements)
- **Susceptibility to Greenwashing** (4 statements)

Individuals with higher scores on this survey demonstrated a lower susceptibility to deceptive marketing strategies in sustainable retailing. The content validity of the survey questions was reviewed by a panel of experts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary objectives of this study were to explore demographic differences in decision-making styles on the basis of locality and gender among university-going adults and to examine the association between the variables considered in the study. To fulfil these objectives, the Decision Styles Questionnaire (DSQ) developed by Leykin and DeRubeis (2010), the Moral Identity Questionnaire (MIQ) developed by Blacks and Reynolds (2016), and a self-constructed survey (CPR) designed to explore consumer purchase responses in terms of their susceptibility to deceptive marketing strategies, particularly in the context of greenwashing, i.e. a type of deceptive marketing strategy prevalent in sustainable retailing, were administered to a sample of 152 students, consisting of 65 males and 87 females. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data, and the following sections detail and discuss the obtained findings.

Table 1 Mean Comparison of CPR Scores Based on Students' Gender (N = 152)

	Males		Females		<i>t</i> -ratio	<i>p</i> -value
	M	SD	M	SD		
CPI	35.98	5.57	33.52	4.54	2.99	.01

Note: males = 65; females = 87; a higher score on the CPR indicates less susceptibility.

The study employed independent-sample t-tests to examine differences in CPR scores based on participants' gender (Table 1). Significant mean differences were found for CPR scores ($t(150) = 2.99, p < .01$). The findings indicated that male students reported higher scores on the survey assessing consumer susceptibility to deceptive marketing practices in sustainable retailing ($M = 35.98, SD = 5.57$) compared to female students ($M = 33.52, SD = 4.54$). The result obtained supports the formulated hypothesis (H_1) of this study and suggests that males are less susceptible to various misleading marketing strategies used by companies in the name of green products.

Table 2 Mean Comparison of CPR Scores Based on Students' Locality (N = 152)

	Urban		Rural		<i>t</i> -ratio	<i>p</i> -value
	M	SD	M	SD		
CPR	34.31	5.52	34.94	4.60	.74	.46

Note: urban = 87; rural = 65; a higher score on the CPR indicates less susceptibility.

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

Independent-sample t-tests were conducted to explore potential differences in CPR scores based on students' locality (Table 2). The findings revealed no significant mean differences in CPI scores between the two locality types. The result obtained rejects the proposed hypothesis (H₂), suggesting both urban and rural consumers are equally vulnerable to being influenced by deceptive marketing claims about sustainability and environmental friendliness.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations of Variables included in the Study (N=152)

Variables	M	SD	Range	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. DMP	34.58	5.21	10-50	1	.58**	-.51**	-.34**	-.47**	.64**	-.39**	.35**	-.43**
2. MI	75.16	8.79	20-100		1	-.52**	-.19*	-.49**	.56**	-.54**	.16*	-.39**
3. Avo	15.33	3.36	5-25			1	.27**	.73**	-.42**	.48**	-.03	.53**
4. Dep	21.61	3.95	6-30				1	.35**	-.23**	.11	-.22**	.29**
5. Anx	15.95	3.73	5-25					1	-.41**	.48**	.01	.59**
6. Vig	23.51	3.87	6-30						1	-.38**	.39**	-.25**
7. Spo	11.87	3.05	4-20							1	.14	.49**
8. Int	17.23	2.82	5-25								1	.01

Note: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; a higher score on the CPR indicates less susceptibility.

The correlation analysis presented in Table 3 found significant associations between susceptibility to deceptive marketing practices (as measured by CPR scores) and other variables considered in the study. The result obtained is consistent with the proposed hypothesis (H₃) indicating a significant positive correlation between CPR scores and moral integrity ($r = .58, p < .01$), and the null hypothesis (H_{4.1}) and (H_{4.2}) are not supported by the findings, demonstrating a significant positive correlation between CPR scores and two decision-making styles: vigilant ($r = .64, p < .01$) and intuitive ($r = .35, p < .01$). These results suggest that individuals with higher moral integrity, as well as those who adopt a careful, deliberate decision-making approach or rely on their intuition, are less likely to fall victim to deceptive marketing practices used by various companies. However, all other decision-making styles exhibited significant negative correlations with CPR scores contradicting the formulated null hypotheses (H_{4.3}) to (H_{4.7}) which imply that individuals who scored higher on avoidant ($r = -.51, p < .01$), dependent ($r = -.34, p < .01$), anxious ($r = -.47, p < .01$), spontaneous ($r = -.39, p < .01$), and brooding ($r = -.43, p < .01$) decision-making styles were found to be more susceptible to deceptive marketing practices. These findings suggest that people who tend to avoid decisions, rely on others, experience anxiety, act impulsively, or dwell on negative thoughts are more vulnerable to the influence of deceptive marketing.

Table 4 Hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting Susceptibility to deceptive marketing practices (N = 152)

Variables	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R ²	ΔR^2
		LL	UL				
Step 1						.06	.06**
Constant	37.78**	34.08	41.49	1.89			
Gender	-2.42**	-4.05	-.79	.83	-.23**		
Locality	.42	-1.21	2.05	.83	.04		

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

Variables	<i>B</i>	95% CI for <i>B</i>		<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR ²
		<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>				
Step 2						.39	.33**
Constant	6.44	-1.04	13.92	3.79			
Gender	-1.04	-2.40	.30	.68	-.10		
Locality	2.04**	.68	3.41	.69	.20**		
MI	.36**	.28	.44	.04	.61**		
Step 3						.62	.23**
Constant	20.01**	9.73	30.27	5.19			
Gender	-1.25*	-2.36	-.13	.56	-.12*		
Locality	1.75**	.59	2.90	.58	.17**		
MI	.13**	.05	.22	.04	.23**		
Avo	-.15	-.40	.10	.12	-.01		
Dep	-.15	-.29	.01	.07	-.11		
Anx	-.03	-.26	.20	.12	-.02		
Vig	.46**	.27	.65	.09	.35**		
Spo	.01	-.23	.25	.12	.01		
Int	.25*	.02	.48	.12	.14*		
Bro	-.33**	-.56	-.09	.12	-.19**		

Note: CI = Class Interval, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit, SE = Standard Error
 MI: moral integrity; Avo: avoidant; Dep: dependent; Anx: anxious; Vig: vigilant; Spo: spontaneous; Int: intuitive; Bro: brooding; a higher score on the DMP indicates less susceptibility

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of moral integrity and decision-making styles on susceptibility to deceptive marketing strategies. The findings support the hypothesis formulated (H₅), explaining a significant effect of moral integrity and decision-making styles on susceptibility to deceptive marketing strategies in sustainable retailing. Model 1 included two demographic variables: gender and locality of the participants. Model 2 added moral integrity as a predictor, while Model 3 incorporated seven decision-making styles: avoidant, dependent, anxious, vigilant, spontaneous, intuitive, and brooding. As presented in Table 4, the predictor demographic variables in Model 1 explained 6% of the variance ($R^2 = .06$) in susceptibility to deceptive marketing strategies, with $F(2, 149) = 4.58, p < .01$. However, the only variable to reach significance was gender ($\beta = -0.23, p < .01$). Females demonstrated a higher susceptibility to deceptive marketing strategies compared to males. After controlling for demographic characteristics and introducing moral integrity in Model 2, the results showed that it explained 39% of the variance ($R^2 = .39$) in the criterion variable, with $F(3, 148) = 31.90, p < .01$. The explanatory variance significantly increased by 33% in Model 2 ($\Delta R^2 = .33$) with $F(1, 148) = 81.60, p < .01$, and with locality and moral integrity reaching significant levels. The predictive power (β) of locality was .20 ($p < .01$), indicating that rural participants were less susceptible to deceptive marketing strategies than their urban counterparts. The β for moral integrity was .61 ($p < .01$), suggesting that higher levels of moral integrity were significantly associated with reduced susceptibility to deceptive marketing strategies. After incorporating all decision-making styles in Model 3, the total explanatory variance increased to 62% ($F(10, 141) = 22.95, p < .01$), suggesting that the addition of all decision-making styles significantly improved the model's ability to explain variance by 23% ($\Delta R^2 = .23$) with $F(7, 141) = 12.01, p < .01$. The findings of this model indicate that, in addition to gender, locality, and moral integrity, three decision-making styles significantly predicted

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

susceptibility to deceptive marketing strategies: vigilant ($\beta = 0.35, p < .01$), intuitive ($\beta = 0.14, p < .05$), and brooding ($\beta = -0.19, p < .01$). Individuals who remain vigilant and rely on their intuition were found to be less susceptible to deceptive marketing strategies than those who excessively focus on negative thoughts and outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The present study findings reveal a significant gender difference in consumer susceptibility to deceptive marketing strategies, with males demonstrating lower susceptibility than females towards greenwashing tactics which confirms the findings by Klass and Wilkinson-Ryan (2023) and Yu (2020) indicating men are generally more doubtful of advertising, including green advertising than women, but is in contrast with some studies which have found that women are more sensitive to detect fake or misleading claims, leading to reduced purchase intentions (Banerjee et al., 2023; Fathy et al., 2016).

In consistence with previous research (Klein & Sharma, 2022; Isaacson, et al., 2018); from developing an emotional relationship with a product or brand to evaluating the ad information rationally, consumer decision-making styles are considered to be a significant antecedent in consumer purchasing behaviour. This study also reveals a significant relationship between CPR scores and various decision-making styles. Specifically, vigilant and intuitive decision-making styles are found to share a significant positive correlation with CPR scores, whereas a significant negative correlation is found between CPR scores and all other decision-making styles, such as avoidant, anxious, etc. This suggests that consumers who make choices through careful consideration of all available alternatives, re-examination and review of information, avoid hasty conclusions and take sufficient time to attentively think about better options (Chatterjee et al., 2023; Upadhyay, 2021), have high CPR scores i.e. less susceptibility towards misleading claims in sustainable retailing. Interestingly, the consumers who tend to attend to each detail precisely, and rely on their gut feeling while making a choice or decision are also less susceptible to deceptive marketing strategies. The findings also reveal a significant positive correlation between moral integrity scores and lower susceptibility to a deceptive marketing strategy which suggests that the consumers who make morally governed judgements while making purchase choices are more resistant to fall for deceptive claims. Highlights the importance of moral and ethical considerations in consumer decision-making, as consumers with strong moral judgements are more likely to resist misleading claims and their moral considerations help them to make more informed choices. Moreover, the findings of regression model utilized in this study has demonstrated that, three decision-making styles including vigilant, intuitive, and brooding along with moral integrity and two demographics i.e. gender and locality included in this study significantly predicts consumers' susceptibility to deceptive marketing strategies, and the overall model showed 62% variance in the CPR scores.

These findings highlight the importance of informed, rational and ethically sound consumer decision-making, and also suggest that identifying consumer profiles susceptible to deceptive marketing strategies is crucial for mitigating the effects of misleading claims. The analysis of decision-making styles and morality contributes insights into the psychological features of decision-making and moral judgement and reasoning influencing the proneness of consumers to become susceptible to deceptive strategies in sustainable retailing, thereby facilitating the development of targeted interventions aligned with consumers' preferences by researchers and practitioners.

REFERENCES

- Abdel Wahab, H., Diao, N. M., & Ahmed Nagaty, S. (2023). Demographic characteristics and consumer decision-making styles: Do they impact fashion product involvement?. *Cogent Business & Management*, *10*(2), 2208430.
- Akturan, U., & Tezcan, N. (2019). How Do Firms' actions Impact Green Scepticism? The Effects of Green Brand Associations, Green Brand Equity and Greenwashing. *Journal of Management Marketing and Logistics*, *6*(4), 204-211.
- Akturan, U. (2018). How does greenwashing affect green branding equity and purchase intention? An empirical research. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *36*(7), 809-824.
- Alsaad, A. K. (2021). Ethical judgment, subjective norms, and ethical consumption: The moderating role of moral certainty. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *59*, 102380.
- Bavolar, J. (2023). Decision-Making Styles and Decision Outcomes. In *Brain, Decision Making and Mental Health* (pp. 465-486). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Berrone, P., Fosfuri, A., & Gelabert, L. (2017). Does greenwashing pay off? Understanding the relationship between environmental actions and environmental legitimacy. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *144*, 363-379.
- Black, J. E., & Reynolds, W. M. (2016). Development, reliability, and validity of the Moral Identity Questionnaire. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *97*, 120-129.
- Banerjee, S., Rocereto, J. F., Kwak, H., & Pandey, A. (2023). Debunking fake ad claims: the moderating role of gender. *International Journal of Advertising*, *42*(8), 1352-1376.
- Braga, S., Martínez, M. P., Correa, C. M., Moura-Leite, R. C., & Da Silva, D. (2019). Greenwashing effect, attitudes, and beliefs in green consumption. *RAUSP Management Journal*, *54*(2), 226-241.
- Brockinton, A., Hirst, S., Wang, R., McAlaney, J., & Thompson, S. (2022). Utilising online eye-tracking to discern the impacts of cultural backgrounds on fake and real news decision-making. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 999780.
- Chatterjee, S., Chaudhuri, R., Kumar, A., Wang, C. L., & Gupta, S. (2023). Impacts of consumer cognitive process to ascertain online fake review: A cognitive dissonance theory approach. *Journal of Business Research*, *154*, 113370.
- Fathy, D., Elsharnouby, T. H., & Aish, E. A. (2016). Deception in advertising revisited: Antecedents and differences in perception across consumer groups. *International Journal of Business and Emerging Markets*, *8*(4), 403-425.
- Gillani, A., & Kutaula, S. (2018). An introduction to special issue: Sustainability and ethical consumerism. *Management Decision*, *56*(3), 511-514.
- Hameed, I., Hyder, Z., Imran, M., & Shafiq, K. (2021). Greenwash and green purchase behavior: An environmentally sustainable perspective. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 1-22.
- Isaacson, J. I., Jordaan, Y., & Van Heerden, G. (2018). The relationship between individual-level culture and consumer decision-making styles through consumer involvement. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *41*, 112-120.
- Juárez-Varón, D., Mengual-Recuerda, A., Capatina, A., & Cansado, M. N. (2023). Footwear consumer behavior: The influence of stimuli on emotions and decision making. *Journal of Business Research*, *164*, 114016.
- Klass, G., & Wilkinson-Ryan, T. (2023). Gender and Deception: Moral Perceptions and Legal Responses. *Nw. UL Rev.*, *118*, 193.

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

- Klein, A., & Sharma, V. M. (2022). Consumer decision-making styles, involvement, and the intention to participate in online group buying. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 64, 102808.
- Kudłak, R. (2024). Greenwashing or Striving to Persist: An Alternative Explanation of a Loose Coupling Between Corporate Environmental Commitments and Outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-16.
- Kumar, V., Verma, P., Jha, A., Lai, K. K., & Do, M. H. (2022). Dynamics of a medium value consumer apparel supply chain key parameters. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 71(2), 445-476.
- Lewis, K. B., Ahmed, F., Lauck, S., Carroll, S., & Stacey, D. (2023). Engaging Women in Decisions About Their Heart Health. In *Biology of Women's Heart Health* (pp. 353-370). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Leykin, Y., & DeRubeis, R. J. (2010). Decision-making styles and depressive symptomatology: Development of the Decision Styles Questionnaire. *Judgment and Decision making*, 5(7), 506-515.
- Liu, M. T., Liu, Y., & Mo, Z. (2020). Moral norm is the key: An extension of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) on Chinese consumers' green purchase intention. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 32(8), 1823-1841.
- Lubowiecki-Vikuk, A., Dąbrowska, A., & Machnik, A. (2021). Responsible consumer and lifestyle: Sustainability insights. *Sustainable production and consumption*, 25, 91-101.
- Luttrell, A., Teeny, J. D., & Petty, R. E. (2021). Morality matters in the marketplace: The role of moral metacognition in consumer purchasing. *Social Cognition*, 39(3), 328-351.
- Mann, L., Burnett, P., Radford, M., & Ford, S. (1997). The Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire: An instrument for measuring patterns for coping with decisional conflict. *Journal of behavioral decision making*, 10(1), 1-19.
- Martinez, L. F., & Jaeger, D. S. (2016). Ethical decision making in counterfeit purchase situations: the influence of moral awareness and moral emotions on moral judgment and purchase intentions. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 33(3), 213-223.
- Mortimer, G., Fazal-e-Hasan, S. M., Grimmer, M., & Grimmer, L. (2020). Explaining the impact of consumer religiosity, perceived risk and moral potency on purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 55, 102115.
- Patowary, B. (2020). Trends In Green Marketing and Responsible Consumerism in North-East. *International Journal of Management (IJM)*, 11(12).
- Savioni, L., Triberti, S., Durosini, I., & Pravettoni, G. (2023). How to make big decisions: A cross-sectional study on the decision-making process in life choices. *Current Psychology*, 42(18), 15223-15236.
- Scott, S. G., & Bruce, R. A. (1995). Decision-making style: The development and assessment of a new measure. *Educational and psychological measurement*, 55(5), 818-831.
- Sprotles, G. B., & Kendall, E. L. (1986). A methodology for profiling consumers' decision-making styles. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 20(2), 267-279.
- Upadhyay, D. (2021). Consideration of future consequences and decision-making patterns as determinants of conflict management styles. *IIMB Management Review*, 33(1), 5-14.
- Winkel, H., & Bhatt, D. (2020). The role of culture and language in moral decision-making. *Culture and Brain*, 8(2), 207-225.

Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims

- Yu, J. (2020). Consumer responses toward green advertising: The effects of gender, advertising skepticism, and green motive attribution. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 26(4), 414-433.
- Zou, L. W., & Chan, R. Y. (2019). Why and when do consumers perform green behaviors? An examination of regulatory focus and ethical ideology. *Journal of Business Research*, 94, 113-127.
- Zhang, K., Pan, Z., Janardhanan, M., & Patel, I. (2023). Relationship analysis between greenwashing and environmental performance. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 25(8), 7927-7957.

Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Sharma, R. & Kaushik, A. (2024). Beyond Eco-Labels: The Impact of Morality and Decision-Making Styles on Consumer Susceptibility to Deceptive Sustainability Claims. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(4), 2436-2447. DIP:18.01.231.20241204, DOI:10.25215/1204.231