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Relationship Analysis between Gandhian Values Among Individuals and Sustainable Consumption Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable consumption has recently become necessary during a time when there is a global environmental crisis and decreased natural resources. There is ample research on many aspects of consumer behaviour and sustainability; however, there is a gap in the field, as there has been minimal exploration of value systems related to consumption, especially in the area of indigenous philosophical frameworks. The result highlighted the influential role of Gandhian values in shaping consumers behavior towards sustainable consumption. The findings offer valuable insights to both academics and practitioners, particularly in the realm of the consumer market within Indian culture. Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on sustainable consumption and offers practical implications for promoting environmentally responsible choices in the market.

Keywords: Gandhian values, SDG12, Consumption behaviour, Sustainable development, Green consumption, Sustainable consumption.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, there has been a notable escalation in per capita carbon dioxide emissions in India, with levels increasing from 0.39 metric tonnes in 1970 to a peak of 1.91 metric tonnes in 2022 (Statista, 2023). Textile wastes amount to as much as 7,800 kilotonnes in a year in India, and a significant share of that, around 51%, is contributed by Indian consumers themselves, known as post-consumer wastes. This landfill sprawls across an area measuring approximately 70 acres, equivalent to 40 football pitches. As much as government actions are required, individual responsibility. Due to all these challenges, companies, governments, and individuals increasingly realise the need to adapt to more viable options. This includes rethinking production methods, adopting green technologies, using responsible sourcing and manufacturing, minimising waste, and urging consumers to be more eco-sensitive.

There is a need for individuals and society as a whole to engage in consumption patterns that are environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable. From this perspective, values are highly important in guiding the response to such environmental crises. Values refer to the moral compass guiding behaviours, decisions, and priorities. People may value nature for different reasons, for its own sake (intrinsic values) or the benefits it provides humans (instrumental values). Both values can influence environmental protection efforts, as individuals and organisations may prioritise actions that align with their specific values.

Many researchers have shown personal values (Homer & Kahle, 1988), environmental values (Kautish & Sharma, 2020; Lazaric et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2014), personal values (Barbarossa et al., 2017; Bhardwaj et al., 2023), and social values (Kumar et al., 2021) related to sustainable behaviour. Dong and Huang (2025) employ the theory of consumption values as the theoretical foundation to examine the factors influencing consumer choice behaviour regarding green products.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi, also commonly known as "Mahatma", which means "great soul", was born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, a coastal town in the Kathiawar peninsula in British-ruled India.

He played a crucial role in India's independence from British rule and the years following independence. Gandhi formulated his philosophical and spiritual beliefs by integrating his extensive understanding of the religious teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, and Islam (John, n.d.). His autobiography, "The Story of My Experiments with Truth", provides insight into his philosophies. Through his life's endeavours and invaluable teachings, Gandhi has presented substantive resolutions to the intricate environmental challenges, paving the way for safeguarding and conserving surroundings.

While Gandhi did not directly address sustainability as a modern-day concept, his philosophical and ethical beliefs resonate deeply with the fundamental pillars of sustainability. Even people who resemble Gandhi Ji in their value orientation can be found (Sheth, 1995). Many studies are done on testing the impact of values on sustainable consumption behaviour. Studying the connection between individuals understanding of Gandhian values and sustainable consumption behaviour This research makes an efforts to provide valuable insights in the domain of research by testing the correlation between Gandhian values among individuals and sustainable consumption behaviour.

RQ: Does individuals understanding of Gandhian values relate to sustainable consumption behaviour.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gandhian Values

Gandhian values includes non-violence (ahimsa), simplicity, non-possessiveness (aparigraha), self-reliance (swadeshi), welfare of all (sarvodaya), non-stealing (Asteya), self-rule (Swaraj), self-restraint, service to others (Seva) and truth (satya). Bansal and Srivastava (2008) emphasises the role and significance of Gandhi's philosophy in creating socially responsible systems aimed at holistic development. The work likely advocates for integrating Gandhi's philosophy into the design and implementation of such systems. Mazumdar and Mukhopadhyay (2022) argue that spiritual well-being and consciousness play crucial roles in driving sustainable consumption practices.

Gandhi's emphasis on self-restraint and the pursuit of inner fulfillment rather than material wealth resonates with contemporary calls for a shift towards more sustainable lifestyles that prioritize well-being over consumption. Gandhi laid the groundwork for a more inclusive approach to sustainability that recognizes the interconnectedness of economic, social, and environmental issues (Bansal & Bajpai, 2011). The emergence of Gandhian values and their impact on consumption emerged in a seminal paper by Mishra et al. (2017) through a qualitative survey reinstating that values lead to behaviour and Gandhian values have important customer outcomes in terms of environmental impact purchase and used criteria.

Sustainable consumption

Sustainable consumption is influenced by societal values and goals. Understanding the relationship between values and sustainable consumption behaviour is essential for sustainable development. Minton et al. (2018) found the adoption of sustainable consumption is influence of social group whereas Wang et al. (2015) found the explanatory power of psychological variables is low in explaining sustainable consumption behaviour. Sustainable consumption behaviour is influenced by a complex interplay of personal values and social identity, reinforcing the idea that emotional and psychological factors play a significant role in shaping consumer decisions.

Lazaric et al. (2020) investigate the determinants of sustainable consumption in France, emphasizing the importance of social influence and environmental values. Hosta & Zabkar (2020) examine the antecedents of environmentally and socially responsible sustainable consumer behaviour, highlighting the dual focus on environmental and social dimensions of sustainability. Their research indicates that understanding the social aspects of sustainability is critical for promoting responsible consumer behaviours. According to Thogersen and Olander (2002), Human values is an important antecedent determining sustainable consumption behaviour. It is believed that consumers attitude, subjective norms, perceived behaviour control are affected by human values.

H1: There is significant relationship between Gandhian values among individuals and sustainable consumption behaviour.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire items were assessed on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (indicating strong disagreement) to 7 (indicating strong agreement). The measurement instrument utilised is shown in Table 1. With the help of SPSS Software on the sample

response of 716 the data analysis was performed. The common method bias was checked as per guidelines of Podsakoff et al. (2003). Then the normality distribution was checked and accordingly correlation analysis was conducted.

Table 1 Measurement Instrument

S.No.	Variable	Indicator	Statements	Source
1	**GANDHIAN VALUES**			Mishra et al. (2017)
	Personal Values	PV1	"Self-control is desirable to self-indulgence (satisfying ones needs without concern for environment)."	
		PV2	"Peaceful ways of persuasion should be followed."	
		PV3	"Values are required in day-to-day life."	
		PV4	"Tolerance for all religion and races is essential."	
	Economic values	ECV1	"No job is too low to be undertaken."	
		ECV2	"Scarce resources of society should not be allocated for the production of goods and services used only by small section of society."	
		ECV3	"Labor should not be exploited to maximise production."	
		ECV4	"Reduction of inequality must be undertaken (we must buy products from companies that employ people with disabilities and other groups)."	
	Leadership Values	LV1	"Participative decision-making process is advisable."	
		LV2	"Transparency in decision-making process is essential."	
		LV3	"Empowerment of subordinates is a must to enable them to work productively."	
	Social Values	SV1	"Sensitivity toward well-being of others must be practiced while making consumption decisions."	
		SV2	"Cleanliness leads to prosperity and environmental protection."	
	Environmental Values	ENV1	"Production should not be at the cost of damaging the environment."	
		ENV2	"The environment should be protected and preserved for the well-being of the future generations."	
2	**SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOUR**			Quoquab and Mohammad (2020)
	Affective	Affe1	"I feel good when I can control my whims for buying unnecessary things."	
		Affe2	"I try not to waste food or beverage."	
		Affe3	"I prefer to buy organic food, since it is environmentally friendly."	
		Affe4	"I prefer to pay more to purchase environmentally friendly products."	
		Affe5	"I prefer to use paper/jute bags, since they are biodegradable."	
		Affe6	"I like to purchase only what I need."	
		Affe7	"I feel happy to give priority to environmental welfare."	
	Cognitive	Cog1	"I believe wasting food and other consumables is unethical."	
		Cog2	"I am aware that excess consumption can cause a shortage of natural resources."	
		Cog3	"I believe that it is important to use eco-friendly products and services."	
		Cog4	"I believe that individuals should care for the future	

S.No.	Variable	Indicator	Statements	Source
			generation."	
		Cog5	"I believe that it is our responsibility to care for the natural environment."	
		Cog6	"I know that the natural resources are decreasing at an alarming rate."	
	Conative	Con1	"I reduce the misuse of goods and services (e.g., I switch off the lights and the fan when I am not in the room)."	
		Con2	"I purchase environmentally friendly products even though they are slightly expensive."	
		Con3	"I avoid consumption activities that can lead to environmental pollution."	
		Con4	"I use biodegradable packages and engage in recycling of bottles and containers. (e.g., use of cloth/ jute/paper bag instead of plastic bag)."	
		Con5	"I do not waste my food and beverage."	
		Con6	"I spend my money wisely in order to avoid wastage and excessive purchases."	
		Con7	"I keep contributing to environmental welfare in all respects."	
		Con8	"I do not engage in any purchase that can have negative effects on the environment."	

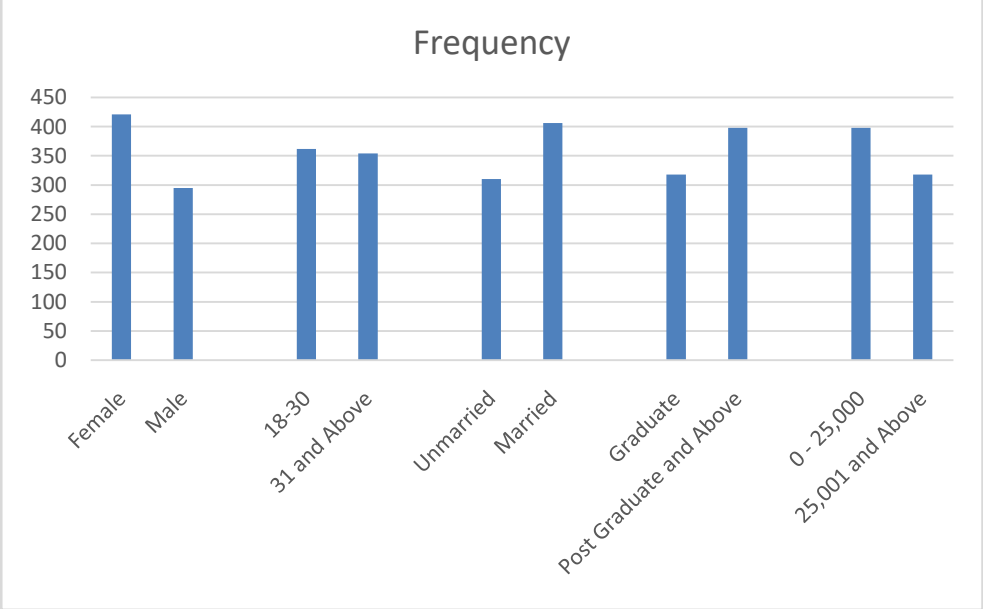

Figure 1: Descriptive statistics of the demographic profile of respondents with respect to gender, age, marital status, educational qualification and monthly income (in rupees)

Figure 1 shows the sample of the study comprises 421 male respondents and 295 female respondents. The number of male respondents was higher as compared to female respondents. 362 respondents were in the age group of 18-30 years, and 354 respondents were above the age of 30 years. Out of the total respondents, the majority of them, i.e., 406 respondents, were married, and 310 were unmarried. In terms of the educational qualification, 398 of the respondents were postgraduates and above, and 318 respondents were graduates. In terms of the monthly personal income in rupees, the majority fall in the bracket of 0-25,000, followed by 318 respondents in the bracket of 25,001 and above.

The testing of the hypotheses is done by using the SPSS. The study aimed to examine the relationship between individuals' adherence to Gandhian values and their sustainable consumption behaviour, and to determine the strength and nature of this association. The study analysed correlation coefficient (r) on sample size of 716 respondents.

Table 2: Correlation between Gandhian values among individuals towards sustainable consumption behaviour

Hypothesis	Variables	Correlation	Result
H1	GV <->SCB	0.445	Accepted

Note: GV- Gandhian values and SCB- Sustainable consumption behaviour.

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
As shown in Table 2, the correlation coefficient (r) between Gandhian values and sustainable consumption behaviour is 0.445. this indicate a moderate positive correlation (Cohen, 1988). As adherence to Gandhian values increases, their sustainable consumption behaviour also tends to increase. The result indicates that there exist a moderate positive significant relationship between Gandhian values and sustainable consumption behaviour at 5% level of significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, H1 was accepted.

The correlation of 0.445 suggests that Gandhian values are moderately associated with sustainable consumption behaviour. Individuals who identify more strongly with Gandhian principles (such as simplicity, ethical use of resources, frugality, and non-materialism) are more likely to engage in behaviour that are environmentally and socially sustainable. While the relationship is not perfect, the strength of the correlation is meaningful, especially in bahavioural and social sciences, where correlations above 0.50 are considered substantial. The relationship is not necessarily causal, but it supports the idea that Gandhian ethics can inform or align with sustainable living practices.

The analysis reveals a moderate positive correlation between Gandhian values and sustainable consumption behaviour. This suggests that individuals who embody or prioritize Gandhian principles are more inclined toward sustainable consumption practices.

IMPLICATIONS

Managers can lead by being an influence towards simplicity, transparency, and conscious use of resources through their teams and business activities. Policies could provide local incentives that promote simple living, local production practices, and the ethical consumption of locally made products such as eco-friendly businesses, locally made artisan products, and zero-waste initiatives. Marketers can stablish a "brand"-centered culture around Gandhian values that define consumption behaviours of minimalism, non-violence (e.g., cruelty-free products), and self-reliance in the era of false pretence and hyper-consumption.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on Gandhian values, while in future research the values of other great personalities can be explored to enlarge the scope of the study. This study may be expanded to other nations with similar cultural contexts in future research. Future research may aim to include a more diverse sample to enhance the external validity of the findings. Future studies could also extend the research to specific sectors such as tourism, electricity consumption, water usage, the fashion industry, and transportation to examine industry-specific behavioural patterns.

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