

Exploring Drivers and Barriers of Green Purchase Behavior in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors affecting consumers' green buying decision in Pakistan. A qualitative research design was utilized, and semi-structured interviews were used for data collection, to rectify these gaps. Thematic narrative analysis was used to analyze the data. Data saturation was reached at 12 participants and a total of 12 participants were interviewed. The data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo software in line with the approach of thematic analysis recommended by Braun and Clarke. The results showed several important themes affecting the green purchase behavior: green consciousness, perceived cost of green products, government policies, product availability, green awareness and attitudes towards environmental sustainability. Themes emerged that served to inform a conceptual framework that can be quantitatively tested in future research. Theoretical contributions of the study include the extension of the Theory of Planned Behavior, which identified context-specific factors in a developing-country context. Moreover, the results have practical implications for policy makers, green product producers and marketers interested in fostering pro-environmental consumer behavior and contribute to environmental sustainability.



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1. Introduction

Environmental degradation is a major issue around the world (Correia et al., 2023). Overpopulation in the last three decades and overconsumption of earth's resources are the root causes of environmental deterioration (Wang et al., 2020). The deterioration of environment and change in consumer's consciousness has been noticed by the industrial and marketing sectors (Sharma, 2021). Developing countries face unique challenges in building positive green purchase behavior, such as limited resources, lack of awareness, and infrastructure constraints. Factors influencing green purchase behavior in developing countries, economic factors, cultural factors, government policies, infrastructure constraints, consumer behavior, and resource availability (Yusoff et al., 2023).

Green purchase behavior faces many challenges in developing countries like Pakistan, some of the major challenges include lack of awareness, higher costs, green washing, limited availability, confusing or no regulations, perceived lack of effectiveness and infrastructure challenges (Selvanathan et al., 2025). There is lack of awareness in consumers of developing countries the total addressable market size decreases significantly. Regulations and standards about green purchase intention and products are close to none in developing countries, which allows shady practices and phenomena like green washing and green myopia to not only exist but thrive, this can erode consumer trust

in green products and make it more difficult for companies to differentiate themselves from competitors (Soomro et al., 2020). Moreover, some consumers may be skeptical of the environmental benefits of green products. Producing and marketing environmentally friendly products is often more expensive than traditional products. Overall, the challenges in building positive green purchase behavior highlight the need for companies to carefully consider their messaging, pricing, and distribution strategies in order to effectively reach and persuade consumers to make environmentally friendly purchases.

Green purchase behavior have a significant impact on consumer purchase intention literature has shown that consumers are increasingly interested in environmentally friendly products and are willing to pay a premium for products that are marketed as green (Sharma et al., 2023). Green purchase behavior building strategies such as eco-labeling, sustainability messaging and promoting the environmental benefits of a product or service can help to increase consumer awareness and interest in environmentally friendly products from competitors and establish a sense of corporate responsibility and environmental stewardship (Hussain et al., 2020). Research has also shown that green purchase behavior can positively influence consumer purchase intention. When consumers perceive a product or service to be environmentally friendly, they are more likely to purchase it (Dilotsotlhe, 2021). This is especially true for consumers who have strong environmental values or who are motivated to make environmentally conscious purchasing decisions (Majeed et al., 2022). In the above study we found the factors that influence green purchase behavior in developing countries like Pakistan. We found that consumer behavior, infrastructure constraints, and lack of standardization are the factors with most effect on green purchase behavior, with these effects being both positive and negative.

Green purchase behavior in Pakistan bear many hurdles from price challenges to market addressing challenges but through positive compelling strategies, consumers can be persuaded to make environmentally friendly purchases (Soomro et al., 2020). The above literature found that the relation between green purchase behavior and consumer purchase intention is addressed. The developing countries like Pakistan, where every consumer is under budget constraints it is difficult for them to buy new upfront cost-heavy green products (Majeed et al., 2022).

The only potential buyers who would buy mass quantities which would lower cost for under budget consumers in future of such products to fulfill their corporate social duty are not properly addressed and advertised to. There is much room for further research to be conducted to better understand the consumer buying behaviors and green purchase behavior's relation with each other and how positive purchase intention of consumer catapult green purchase behavior's effort to persuade consumer to buy environmentally friendly products (Sharma, 2021). Green purchase behavior can be a powerful tool for increasing consumer purchase intention for environmentally friendly products, but it must be done in an honest and transparent way to build consumer trust and credibility.

There is dearth of research to get depth insights of consumer buying intention and green purchase behavior's relation with each other and focus on how positive purchase intention of consumer catapults green purchase behavior's effort to persuade individual consumer to buy environmentally friendly products (Naz et al., 2020). Despite the increasing interest in environmentally friendly products and the growing awareness of the impact of human activities on the environment, the adoption of green products and services in Pakistan remains low (Patwary et al., 2022). The buyers in Pakistan face lot of hurdles while finding green products often sellers are not aware about green products the barriers mostly faced by consumers involve lack of awareness, infrastructure unavailability, high pricing of green product which lower the purchasing ability of consumers in developing country like Pakistan. The manufactures of green products in developing country also bear certain challenges while promoting the environment friendly products in third world country like Pakistan first most challenge involves lack of government support, limited infrastructure, technology not upgraded, and scarcity of proper regulations in environmental policies and labeling (Soomro et al., 2020).

To address this problem, it is necessary to understand the factors that influence consumer behavior and purchase intention in Pakistan and develop effective green purchase behavior strategies that resonate with local cultures and values. The above-mentioned research gaps lead toward following research question that need to be addressed in current study.

RQ: Explore the drivers and green purchase behavior among Pakistani consumers?

Current study provides numerous theoretical and practical contributions by delivering several themes extending the theory of planned behavior for further investigated quantitatively. Practical contributions lead towards new insights for policy makers in field of environment sustainability and marketers who promote green purchase behavior through green products to save environment for further degradation.

2. Literature Review

There is a considerable amount of research on the elements that influence consumers' purchase intention for green products. The factors influencing consumers can vary from industry to industry, according to multidisciplinary research on green buying. The articles chosen for this investigation came from reputable journals in business studies, marketing & supply chain, sustainability (Dangelico et al., 2021). While selecting pertinent publications from various databases, care was made to cover all the synonymous phrases. This led to the usage of a broad range of search phrases, such as "green purchase," "green buying," "green supply chain," "green consuming," "green procurement," etc. 15 articles were chosen based on choice out of 25 that were returned by searches for "green purchasing." Similar to this, a search for "Green purchasing" turned up 15 articles, of which 5 were chosen. There were 50 articles found after searching for "Green supply chain," of which 30 were used in the review (Sharma, 2021).

The other variables "green supply chain network," "green technology" and "green culture" generated 25 articles, with 10 selected for assessment. Only two decades (2000-2023) of data were used in the main database (Scopus), and other databases. After finding every pertinent article, it was first evaluated at the title and abstract level. The review was focused on the theoretical and empirical studies published by the reputable publishers like Rutledge, Springer, Taylor & Francis etc. along with chapter from books. White papers, news stories, grey literature, and chapters from academic journals from the universities were not taken into consideration. The articles then were assessed on the basis of their content (Zhang & Dong, 2020). In the examined research papers (from various industries and countries) several organizational and consumer theories were used to explain green purchasing. There are a variety of factors that influence green purchasing in consumer environments that are independent, mediating and moderating (Wang et al., 2020).

In addition, there are several ways that have been utilized in research publications to investigate the impact of independent variables, mediating variables and moderating variables on the results (dependent variables) in consumer settings. The four parts of the review were Theory, Context, Characteristics and Methods. The first section provides a summary of popular "Theories". The second section, referred known as the "Context," assesses the goods and industries taken into account in the earlier research projects. The "Characteristics" section, which is the third, analyses the variables looked into in green buying. This information was extracted from articles that discussed a variety of issues related to "green purchasing" and then analyzed in terms of content analysis to identify how the constructs were associated with each other.

Content examined has been manually labelled using a classification system that provides for greater reproducibility. The categories used in coding were deductive categories and inductive categories from precedents in ideas. Coding was constructed deductively based on previous ideas and inductively based on the content. A number of ideas and frameworks can be linked to studies on green purchasing, in order to fully explain the phenomenon (Dangelico et al., 2021). A theory is a set of logically interconnected ideas that can be put into practice (Rudner, 1968). The study examines how theories give logical explanations to phenomena, and how the phenomena are explained by the interaction and connection between a set of constructs. Based on the fundamental conceptual organization that they all share, and which is believed to have an impact on the results under study, these theories can be grouped. It is noteworthy that some research related to a specific topic was linked with specific theories (e.g. Theory of Buying Values, etc.). Other studies used general frameworks like Hofstede's dimensions of culture and value belief norm (Sharma et al., 2023).

Theory of planned behavior used explanation for the concept of green purchasing in the publications examined in this study. The Theory of Consumption Values was found to be the second-most often used theory. Other consumer theories used in previous studies are the Value Belief Norm, the Theory of Reasoned Behavior and Hofstede's Cultural

Dimensions. The earlier research studies employed the following theories as concepts: Institutional Theory, Transaction Cost Theory, Resource Based Theory, and Complexity Theory. Eleven articles additionally covered various theories. Pakistan is one of the developing countries that are facing major environmental issues, such as air pollution, water pollution, deforestation, and climate change (Soomro et al., 2020).

The attitudes and opinions of consumers regarding green products can influence their purchasing decisions. According to research, those who care about the environment and think that what they do may change the world are more inclined to buy eco-friendly goods. However, consumers who are dubious about the environmental advantages of green products can be less inclined to make eco-friendly decisions (Gill et al., 2021).

Awareness about the benefits of green products can also influence green purchase behavior. Studies have shown that consumers who are more informed about the environmental benefits of green products are more likely to purchase them. Therefore, increasing consumer knowledge and awareness through education and information campaigns can help to promote green purchase behavior. In conclusion, several factors affect green purchase behavior of consumers in Pakistan, including environmental awareness, product availability and price, religious beliefs, government policies, and social norms and values. Businesses and policymakers can use this knowledge to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns and encourage consumers to make environmentally-friendly choices (Gill et al., 2023).

Despite ample research there are still gaps that need to be addressed especially in a third world country like Pakistan where major factors that affect green purchasing behavior of consumer regarding green products are not fully researched or discussed. As of now there is close to none information available about the factors that affect the green purchase behavior of Pakistan which is resulting in information asymmetry in consumer brands and end user consumers resulting in poor adoption of green products (Sharma, 2021). There are gaps in addressing and identification of factors like green washing and green myopia which negatively affect in adoption of green products among consumers.

This study focusses on identification of factors and their effect on green purchasing behavior of consumers in Pakistan such as education, building green consciousness, government policies, product availability, green compliance, and price of green products vs normal products. Despite the valuable contributions of existing research on the factors affecting green purchase behavior of consumers in developing countries, there are still several gaps in the literature that could be addressed through further study. Some of these gaps include limited attention to contextual factors: While existing research has acknowledged that contextual factors such as income level and education level may influence green purchase behavior in developing countries, more research is needed to explore the nuances of these contextual factors.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The exploratory nature of the research, a qualitative research methodology anchored in interpretivism paradigm is selected to obtain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative research is well-suited for investigating novel or complex issues because it enables researchers to probe deeply into participants' experiences, perceptions, and opinions, thereby providing rich and contextualized insights into the research topic (Creswell et al., 2007). This study is based on the interpretivism research paradigm, which holds that reality is subjective and constructed through the experiences and interpretations of individuals (Southall et al., 2016). Interpretivism stresses the significance of understanding the social world from the point of view of the individuals who inhabit it, recognizing the role of context and culture in influencing their experiences and perceptions (Schwandt & Burgon, 2006).

3.2. Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to get data from respondents. The respondent includes consumer of green products in Pakistan. An open-ended questionnaire was designed from literature that termed as protocol in qualitative study. The interviews were conducted with the permission of respondents. When twelve respondents were interviewed, and data was transcribed it was found that saturation point has been achieved.

3.3. Data collection

A thematic analysis approach is utilized to systematically analyzed the data gathered through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis is a common qualitative data analysis technique that permits the identification, examination, and interpretation of patterns or themes within the data. (Braun & Clarke, 2006). NVivo software for qualitative data analysis, is utilized to facilitate data analysis. NVivo offers a variety of tools and capabilities that facilitate the organization, coding, and interpretation of qualitative data, thereby augmenting the rigor and transparency of the analysis (Brandão, 2015). The data analysis process involves the following steps, which are mentioned by (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.4. Ethical Considerations

The study's objective, the participants' rights, and the voluntary participation of their involvement all be explained to the participants. Participants' personal information kept private, and the data only be utilized for this study's objectives. By making sure the questionnaire is not intrusive or insulting, any perception of risk to respondents, such as psychological distress reduced.

4. Data Analysis

The data analysis process involves the following steps:

- The researcher read and reread the interview transcripts in order to familiarize themselves with the data and acquire an initial understanding of the emerging themes and patterns.
- The data were coded systematically using NVivo tool, with codes assigned to meaningful text segments that pertain to the research objectives and questions. The coding process is both inductive and deductive, relying on insights from the data itself and existing literature and theory, respectively.
- The generated codes are evaluated and grouped into broader themes, capturing the data's most important patterns and relationships. As necessary, themes are refined and revised to ensure that they authentically reflect the experiences and perspectives of participants.
- The identified themes are investigated in relation to the coded data and the larger dataset to ensure coherence, consistency, and significance. This process may involve additional theme refinement or consolidation, as well as the identification of subthemes.
- Each theme is defined and named with a detailed description that captures the essence and significance of the theme in relation to the research topic.
- The final stage of analysis involves the integration and interpretation of the themes in relation to the research objectives and existing literature, resulting in a thorough and nuanced account of the findings.

In this study, numerous steps have been taken to guarantee the accuracy and dependability of the data. Then, a small sample of customers per test the protocol to make sure it is simple to comprehend and pertinent to the study and after transcribing the protocol the interviewees were shown the transcription and the accuracy was confirmed. In order to reduce bias and mistakes in data collection, the research team also received training regarding how to conduct the questionnaire. To guarantee correctness and consistency, the data examined using analytical tools in step three.

The respondents were asked open ended questions regarding the adoption of green products and factors that affect the green purchase behavior of consumers of Pakistan their replies were transcribed and two of those replies are mentioned below.

"As far as my experience suggests me that people are now starting to develop a positive attitude towards green products. However, they are adopting these because of their energy efficiency and not because they want to save the environment. In my opinion consumers are starting to normalize and develop norms regarding purchase of green products but adoption is in initial stages. Lack of awareness, budget constraints and lack of Govt. policies regarding green compliance are the major. He later added that the consumer wants to buy green commodities but as soon as he hears the price of such commodities, he changes his decision. Green compliance policies must be developed by the Govt. of Pakistan in addition to these policies Govt. of Pakistan should also introduce zero interest financing

for purchase of green commodities. We live in a third world country where everyone is bound by their budget. To build Positive purchase intention in consumers regarding green purchase the prices of green products must be lowered to a degree that they fall near or equivalent to regular products. Consumers carry a positive behavior regarding purchase of green products at least educated consumers do carry positive behaviors regarding buying of green products. consumers of cities in developing country carry negative behavior regarding purchase of green products as they deny or ignore concepts like climate change, etc. (R3)”

“Pakistani consumer’s attitude towards adoption of green products is positive in this sense that they want to adopt and buy such products. Citizens of developing country have positive attitude towards green consciousness and sustainability however consumers that reside in cities buy such green products because they are cheap to maintain and are energy efficient. Major norms of consumers are again very diverse and is based on their city criteria. Consumers of cities have positive green purchase behavior and citizens of cities are starting to develop such norms however consumers of cities are totally unaware. Consumers purchase behavior is now starting to be affected significantly by green consciousness as they are now starting to acknowledge phenomena like global warming etc. Govt. should legislate and build infrastructure that encourages the purchase of green products and should subsidize companies’ who offer interest free financing of green products. Thus far only a small fraction of potential consumers is able to actualize their purchase of green products because the price of green products is very high and there is no Govt. policy that encourages the purchase of green products through tax reliefs, subsidies and interest free financing. (R7).”

The respondent R3 and R7 have stated the importance of consumer awareness about environment sustainability and other themes emerged from the transcribed data of respondents demonstrate the lack of infrastructure and consciousness that promote consumers to buy green products that government should play the vital role to make such policies that enhance the buying of green products among consumers of developing countries and especially living in cities as they have much availability of media and easy to convince as literacy rate is high and consumer are partially aware about the green products that protect the environment and lessen the natural degradation. After analyzing the data through NVivo certain queries have been executed involving word tree map that search the most talked word and linked it with strings of lines in transcribed data while the other query involved the word tag cloud that make cloud of words that were most frequently used by the respondents during their interviews to that researcher. Third query is related to the hierarchical map that shows the theme area is big in size means it has most relevant theme to the focus of study. Following is mentioned in three queries’ figures:

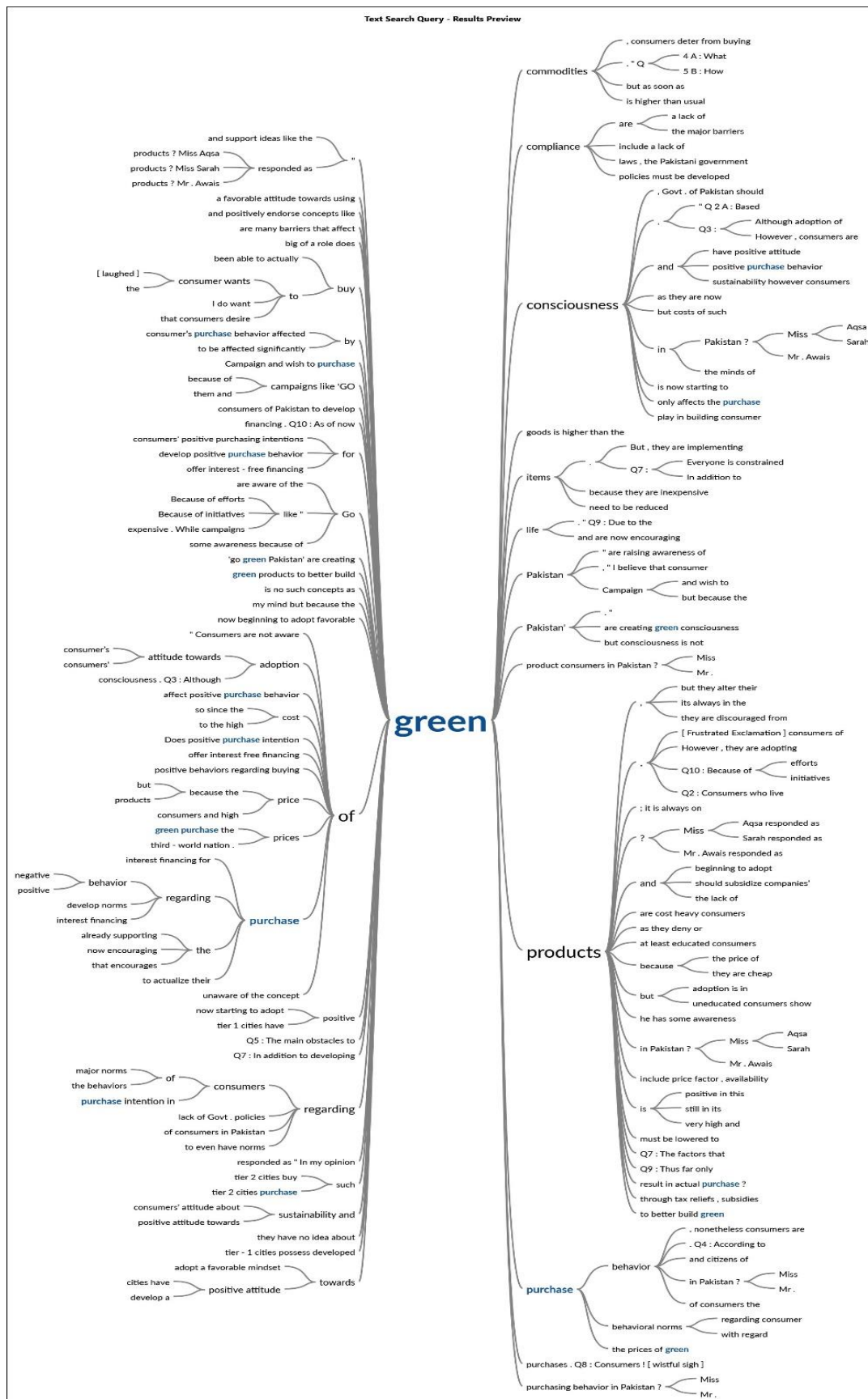


Figure 1: Word Tree Map



Figure 2: Word Cloud

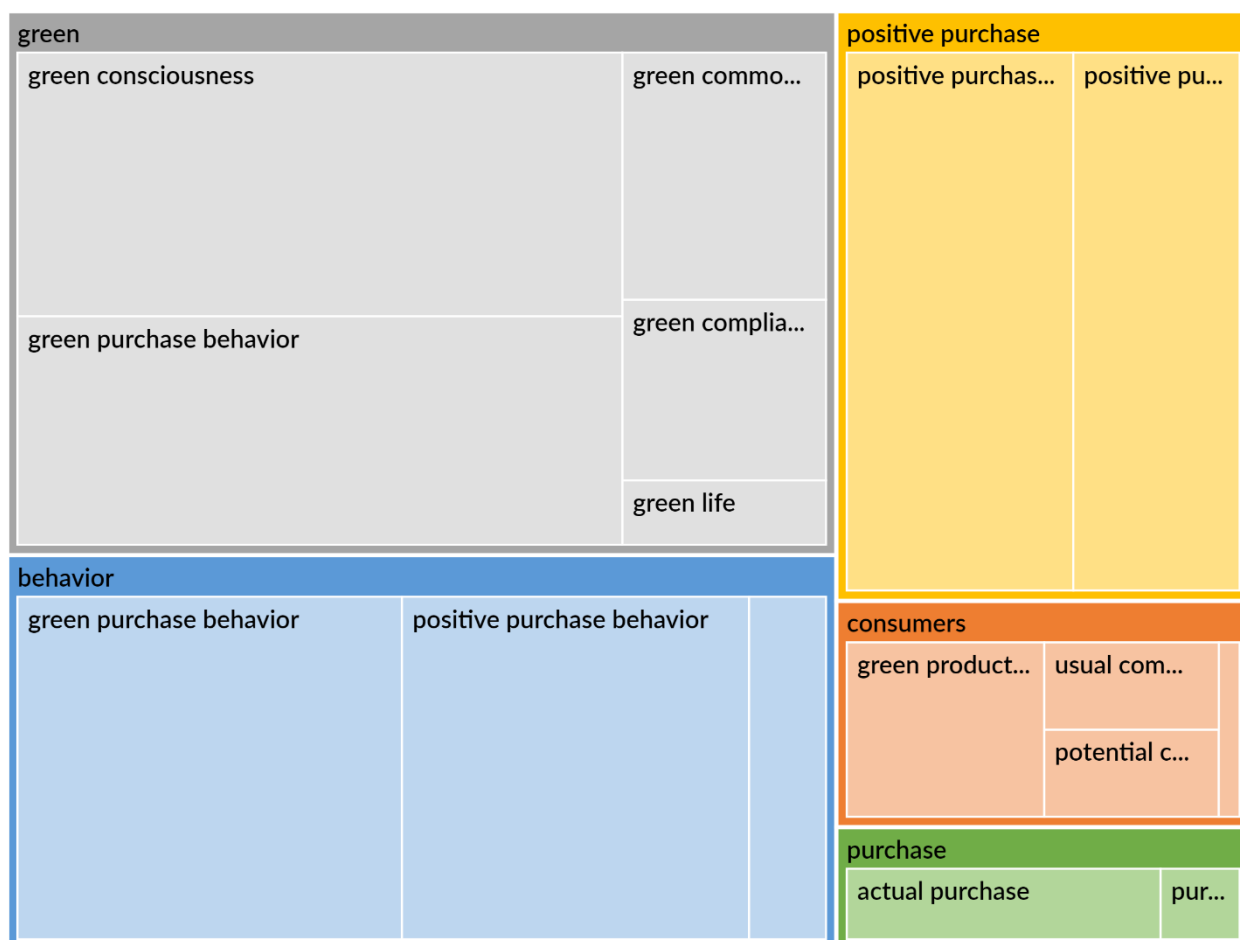


Figure 3: Hierarchical Chart

Word tree map, tag cloud and hierarchal chart as shown in figure 1,2 and 3 demonstrates the pictorial form of themes that emerge from the transcribed data of interviews that show the words which were most discussed and talked by the respondents. As more people are becoming aware of how human activity affects the environment, environmental issues are becoming a major concern on a global scale. Consumer awareness of how their behavior affects the environment has grown over the past few years, which has increased demand for sustainable goods. This has prompted more research on the variables influencing green purchasing behavior for both developed and emerging nations. This theory will concentrate on the investigation of variables influencing consumers' green

purchase behavior in emerging nations. Concern over how consumer activity affects the environment has grown in recent years. As a result, the idea of "green purchasing," which entails selecting goods and services that respect the environment, has gained popularity. Since developing nations are frequently the ones most at risk from the harmful effects of environmental degradation, it is vital to examine the factors influencing consumers' green purchasing behavior in these nations. This essay's goal is to provide a conceptual framework for comprehending the elements that affect consumers' green purchase decisions in developing nations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the study of factors affecting green purchase behavior of consumers in a developing country is important as it sheds light on the drivers and barriers to green purchasing in a context where environmental issues are often more acute. The theoretical framework presented in this paper, based on the theory of planned behavior, provides a useful guide for understanding the factors that influence green purchase behavior.

The study of factors affecting green purchase behavior of consumers in a developing country has important theoretical and practical implications for policymakers, researchers, and businesses alike. Theoretically current study contributes by extending the theory of planned behavior through emerging themes of green purchase behavior, awareness, environmental consciousness. Moreover, the current study explores the codes of green purchase behavior in developing context while previously most of studies were done in developed countries, so it enhances the contextual contribution.

Practically current study has several insights for policy makers and regulators of government authority and private manufacturers who want to promote the green products and environment sustainability. Marketers can get benefit from findings of current study and promote the environmental sustainability awareness, and consciousness among consumers so that they buy green products and save the environment.

Current study has certain limitations that it has only employed the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative approach while in future mixed method approach can be utilized by QUALI+QUANTI approach. While the twelve respondents were chosen consumers from Pakistan using purposive sampling while in future more respondent can be chosen from other country to see the deep insights of green purchasing behavior among consumers at international level. Current study can be extended by different research design like focus group of experts consist of environmental protection agency regulators, manufactures of green products and marketers who promote environment friendly products to get more in-depth codes about green purchasing patterns of consumers and make suitable framework for further investigations.

Author Contributions

Atif Ali Gill: Overall Supervision of research

Maryam Shafique: Data analysis and field work

Umer Ghulam Rasool: Literature Review, Proof reading

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest w.r.t the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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