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Thematic Analysis to Assess Indian Consumers Purchase Intention for Organic Apparel

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Abstract

Consumer behavior is dynamic, and there is a beauty in trying to understand consumer's intention for a product category like organic apparel, especially when it is a unique phenomenon that is scantily explored in an emerging economy like India. This paper is an attempt at understanding the factors that influence Indian consumer's intention to purchase organic apparel. A purposive sampling procedure was adopted in selecting participants. A focus group discussion was conducted to capture data for the thematic analysis. Theoretical thematic analysis was conducted by relying on the theory of planned behavior model. Inductive thematic analysis gave way for other dimensions like product knowledge and involvement, environmental knowledge, and skepticism that evolved out of the themes. Product knowledge and involvement, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitude had an influence on the intention. Environmental knowledge and skepticism indicated a chance to negate the relationship. The textile manufacturers, who are innovating with sustainable fabrics, can look at the dimensions that consumers seek for while making a choice of organic apparel. Domestic and international organic apparel manufacturers can capitalize on the behavioral dimensions of the factors that influence consumer's intention for organic apparel, thereby facilitating identifying the prospect.

Keywords

Organic Apparel, Focus Group Methodology, Perceived Behavioral Control, Thematic Analysis, Purchase Intention, Indian Consumers

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Thematic Analysis to Assess Indian Consumers Purchase Intention for Organic Apparel

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Consumer behavior is dynamic, and there is a beauty in trying to understand consumer's intention for a product category like organic apparel, especially when it is a unique phenomenon that is scantily explored in an emerging economy like India. This paper is an attempt at understanding the factors that influence Indian consumer's intention to purchase organic apparel. A purposive sampling procedure was adopted in selecting participants. A focus group discussion was conducted to capture data for the thematic analysis. Theoretical thematic analysis was conducted by relying on the theory of planned behavior model. Inductive thematic analysis gave way for other dimensions like product knowledge and involvement, environmental knowledge, and skepticism that evolved out of the themes. Product knowledge and involvement, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitude had an influence on the intention. Environmental knowledge and skepticism indicated a chance to negate the relationship. The textile manufacturers, who are innovating with sustainable fabrics, can look at the dimensions that consumers seek for while making a choice of organic apparel. Domestic and international organic apparel manufacturers can capitalize on the behavioral dimensions of the factors that influence consumer's intention for organic apparel, thereby facilitating identifying the prospect. Keywords: Organic Apparel, Focus Group Methodology, Perceived Behavioral Control, Thematic Analysis, Purchase Intention, Indian Consumers

Introduction

India has a tremendous growth potential with a fast-changing apparel market in the retail scenario. Apparel industry in India is beholding certain changing trends, as the industry is one among the contributors to pollution (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2018; Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, 2017). Indian apparel industry foresees an opportunity and a market for sustainable apparel. The industry is on an out spurt to focus on producing and manufacturing organic clothing and to reduce the use of inorganic dyes and chemicals as coloring agents (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2018).

India is statistically the number one producer of organic cotton in the world and also the second largest exporter (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2018). The demand for organic cotton shows a steep increase in the world every year, very specifically in the US and Europe. The organic cotton industry in India is on a growth path, especially in the past five to eight years. For instance, the situation in 2009-2010 was that the domestic market for organic cotton practically was untapped due to low domestic demand. Western countries had by then realized the importance of going green and had shown an increasing trend towards organic consumption (Rana, 2009). Most Indian consumers did not buy organic cotton clothes or organic food, as a vast majority of them were still unaware of the benefits of organic products. The awareness level and purchase of organic products were very much limited to high end consumers in tier 1 and 2 cities like Delhi, Bangalore, and Mumbai (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2018; Rana,

2009). The discussion in the article by Rana (2009) evidences that consumers can be motivated to follow the trend by creating awareness by way of organizing organic fair-trade shows. Until recently, the consumer behavior towards organic and organic consumption was looked upon with some amount of skepticism, but the trend seems to have been changing in recent times in India (Patil, 2015). According to a survey undertaken by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India, there is an increasing health awareness compounded with rising disposable income that gave way for around 62% of high net worth segments to prefer organic products, which again is an increase of 95% compared to the past (Sally, 2013). Among the most regularly purchased items by Indian consumers, the share of organic products is the highest for vegetables (68%), followed by fruits (52%), fruit juices (51%), food grains (50%) and milk (45%). Some of the important considerations that Indian consumers factor in while making the purchasing decisions are origin of the produce and the credibility of the production process (Battacharya, 2013).

There is a definite and expected transition that is foreseen as far as consumer behavior towards organic clothing is concerned, and the fashion industry survives on the philosophy of “change and being trendy” (Rana, 2009, n.p.). It is believed that the community is able to make an impact in shifting the mind-sets of consumers to follow organic clothing trends, purely on considerations of the ill effects of synthetically produced clothing/ apparel (Rana, 2009). Some consumers are still under the illusion that clothes made from synthetic fibers are safe, while in reality, all of these are full of invisible chemicals. The more synthetic clothing that people wear, the greater they are at the risk of absorbing the toxic chemicals contained in these clothing materials that harm health. For instance, petrochemical or non-organic fibers suffocate the skin by obstructing toxic release from the body, thereby causing reactions like skin rashes, nausea, fatigue, thyroid problems, burning, itching, headaches, difficulty in breathing, and various other cancerous ailments (Clement & Clement, 2011; Rovira, Nadal, Schuhmacher, & Domingo, 2015).

“The growth in the Indian fashion industry can be attributed to rapid urbanization in the country and to the evolution of a new class of consumers called the middle class with high disposable income¹.” Coinciding with the changing consumer lifestyle, there has been a paradigm shift in the psychographic profile of the Indian consumers in recent years. The result is that the urban population has evolved with a different outlook on the clothing that they use in a social gathering, and thus they attach a symbolic meaning to the clothing they wear (Amber C., 2013). With the influx of “foreign direct investment²” and global brands coming to India, there is a need to understand the Indian consumers who have proved to be a promising target segment for the growing apparel industry. The Indian consumers are aware of and have had a positive attitude for ethical fashion and organic produce (India Times, 2013). The demand pattern was expected to grow by 5% in the year 2015 (Vijayara, 2010). Seth Petchers, Chief Executive Officer at Shop for Change – Fair Trade, told The India Times, that: “70% of Indian

¹ The textile and clothing sector is considered to be one of the ancient industries in India. As per the Indian Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) the industry has a very close bonding with agriculture especially India being the number one producer in organic cotton, cotton and the second largest producer of silk as per the world statistics. It relies on an ancient culture and traditions of the country as against the world-wide industry standards. Present size estimate is around 108 billion dollars and is expected to reach 223 billion dollars by 2021. The countries textile industry contributes roughly around 5 per cent to India’s gross domestic product (GDP), and 14 per cent to overall Index of Industrial Production (IIP). The textile industry is also one of the largest contributors to India’s export with approximately 13.5 percent of the country’s total export of 42.2 billion dollars. (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2018)

² Foreign direct investment (FDI) is an investment made by a company or individual in one country in business interests in another country, in the form of either establishing business operations or acquiring business assets in the other country, such as ownership or controlling interest in a foreign company. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/f/fdi.asp#ixzz5ABsHwEUy>

consumers will buy environmental products over other merchandise if quality is maintained. The opportunity is huge, and products are being accepted as consumers become more aware of where these products are available” (India Times, 2013, n.p.).

Against this backdrop, the paper intends to conceptualize the constructs from the field of consumer behavior to understand the different factors considered by consumers for evincing their purchase intention for organic apparel in an emerging economy like India. There are many studies in the Indian context that have attempted exploring consumer attitude and behavior specific to the area of green practices, green buying behavior, and green consumerism, (Datta, 2011; Jain & Kaur, 2004; Jauhari & Manaktola, 2007; Mishra & Sharma, 2010). There has been research in Indian context to do with the purchase behavior towards organic cotton clothing and sustainable apparel, and these studies have looked at the consumption behavior of youth and assessed the impact of green apparel knowledge, prior environmental knowledge, and peer influence as factors that lead to the purchase behavior (Khare & Rakesh, 2010; Khare & Sadachar, 2017; Khare, & Varshneya, 2017; Manchiraju, Sadachar, & Khare, 2017). Very recent studies by Yadav and Pathak (2016, 2017) have addressed a range of issues in green consumption and environmental aspect of marketing by applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB) model to figure out the purchase intention for environmentally friendly products. There still are studies that have highlighted the relevance of capitalizing on the TpB model, to explain organic consumption. But there is still a gap in the literature in the Indian context that can be bridged only by subjectively measuring. We devised a qualitative analysis to explore the intention for organic apparel. Research up until now have only explored few dimensions like consumer environmental knowledge, product knowledge and self-relevance, and situational self-relevance (i.e., product involvement) as parameters considered by consumers for making a choice for organic clothing (Khare & Rakesh, 2010; Khare & Sadachar, 2017; Khare & Varshneya, 2017; Manchiraju et al., 2017). We believe these parameters are a constrained set, necessitating a thematical or inductive mechanism to measure the actual factors that would be considered by consumers while making a choice for organic apparel. Having identified the gaps in the existing body of knowledge, we are attempting an exploration through a qualitative approach to unveil a lot more meaning to the subject matter under investigation.

Initially, we discuss the theoretical context of the study. Second, we discuss at length the research design and the methodology, introducing a specific focus on the thematic analysis using focus group discussion as the exploratory approach to the study. Third, we present the results, discussion, and plausible managerial implications with future research. We have considered the qualitative stance to offer further insights into the subject matter under investigation, especially glancing at the gaps in the extant body of literature and focusing on the objective of the study, and thus framing the problem statement as: “*Assessing the factors that influence the purchase intention for organic apparel.*” The objective of the study is to explore the prevalent trend with respect to consumer’s purchase intention for organic apparel, to understand the factors that elicit an attitude and purchase intention towards organic apparel, and to propose recommendations for the marketers to help identify the target consumers for organic apparel.

Literature Review

Review of literature primarily attempts at explaining the TpB Model as this model is perennially applied in understanding green consumption practices among consumers. Recent articles have also measured the relevance of applying the TpB model in the studying sustainable consumption practices of consumers in the Indian context (Verma & Chandra, 2018; Yadav & Pathak, 2016, 2017).

Theory of Planned Behavior Model

Literature shows evidence on the ability of TpB Model to explain organic consumption (Ajzen, 1991). The constructs that encompasses the model are: *Perceived Behavioral Control, Subjective Norms, Attitude, and Intention*. These dimensions which have a theoretical underpinning in explaining consumption have been detailed further in the review section. Manchiraju et al. (2017) have propagated the application and extension of the TpB model in explaining sustainable fashion consumption. Along with the review, there is a snapshot of the socio-demographic profiling of consumers who prefer sustainable or ecofriendly clothing.

Perceived Behavioral Control

According to Ajzen (1991), an individual's likely disposition of a behavior depends on the extent of availability of relevant resources and the prospects to positively consider these resources and behaving heedfully, which is known as control belief. Perceived consumer effectiveness means that the individuals have the ability to manipulate the outcome in a positive manner as a result of their action. Perceived consumer effectiveness proved to have a significant relationship with perceived behavioral control triggering positive outcomes (Roberts, 1995; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2008). Perceived behavioral control has an influencing role in how consumers form their purchase intention for sustainable textile and apparel (Kang, Liu, & Kim, 2013). The product knowledge would lead young consumers to form a perceived consumer effectiveness to transform their outcome into a consumption behavior (Kang et al., 2013).

Subjective Norms

According to Ajzen (1991), subjective norm can be understood as the perceived social force to carry out a particular behavior. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the social or subjective norm is a considerable social pressure which induces the consumers to perform the behavior (Biel & Thøgersen, 2007). Subjective norms form a typical disposition of consumers who comply with the social pressures and referent others that would lead them into making a choice for sustainable textile and apparel (Kang et al., 2013).

Attitude

A favorable attitude towards a product which is environmental friendly is reflective of the organic consumption behavior (Chan, 2001; Vermeir, & Verbeke, 2004). Consumer's perception about a brand or a company and its ethical fashion reputation reflects their attitude and the predispositions (Shen, Wang, Lo, & Shum, 2012). Attitude acts as an important antecedent to the behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991; Singh & Verma, 2017). Consumers who have a positive attitude for sustainable apparel will have a disposition towards intention (Khare & Sadachar, 2017; Khare, & Varshneya, 2017; Manchiraju et al., 2017).

Purchase Intention

According to Ajzen (1991), behavior can be determined and derived from the intention with considerable accuracy. Research in the Indian context evidences consumers specifically, youth, show an intention to purchase organic cotton clothing: clothing with eco label brands (Khare & Sadachar, 2017; Khare, & Varshneya, 2017; Manchiraju et al., 2017). There exists a

segment of Indian urban consumers who are positively motivated towards eco labeled brands of garments (Goswami, 2008).

Socio-Economic and Demographic Factors

Socio-economic and demographic factors such as income and education have greater bearing on consumers' preference for organic products (Thompson & Kidwell, 1998). Price is factored in while making a choice of purchasing organic products. Certain populations are more likely to purchase organic products: younger, single consumers with low household incomes and middle age consumers with higher household incomes who have children at home (Khare & Sadachar, 2017; Khare, & Varshneya, 2017; Manchiraju et al., 2017; Richard, Maria, & Per, 2005). The flip side of the literature states that willingness to pay (WTP) for organic products is not just based on price but is dependent on organic product category (Athanasios & George, 2005). Socio-demographic factors are of prime importance while researching in the fields of assessing environmentally conscious consumption (Auger, Burke, Devinney, & Louviere, 2003).

In hindsight, it is evident that there is a scope for studying the consumers purchase intention for organic apparel in India. It becomes evident from the extant literature that there is need to explore consumers of developing nations in terms of their usage and consumption for organic apparel. Domestic and international marketers who are in the business of sustainable fashion can gain insights for strategizing their business model, as well as to identify segments. The extant literature from the Indian context are yet to explore the different dimensions of a consumer's intent to purchase organic apparel. We as academicians are trying to explore the plausible opportunity for our agribusiness and the textile industry to make a shift towards greener and sustainable economy.

Methods

Research Design

The main methodological instrument used for the study is thematic analysis. The data was procured from the participants through four focus group discussions. The methodological procedures have been detailed in this section.

Focus Group Methodology

Focus group discussion (FGD) assists in reflecting on the variations to the responses, which are very unlikely possible on a one to one interview or an ethnographic study. FGD is a carefully structured discussion wherein the participants are selected by a purposive sampling procedure and are given the opportunity to discuss freely in the context of the study (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2012; Morgan, 1998). An FGD is comprised of six to ten participants who are ideally chosen as they share specific physiognomies. As per the rules, ideally an FGD should be conducted with multiple participants clustered across different groups to understand the variations in the responses across the group (Belk et al., 2012).

Four FGDs were conducted in the city of Kochi (Kerala, India) during the months of September to November 2016. In this study, we selected participants with whom we had acquaintance. The participants who constituted the two groups were students with work experience (42.3%) and the remaining two groups constituted of colleagues (57.7%), from sister institution of the university. The participants were chosen based on purposive sampling technique by maintaining homogeneity within the group and heterogeneity across groups

(Boddy, 2016). There were altogether 26 participants across the four-FGDs. Three focus groups constituted of six members each and one group with eight participants. The study is exempted from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. The socio-demographics of the participants are detailed herein. From the 26 participants, recruited for the FGDs, 46.5% were male and 53.5% were female. 69.2% of the participants were masters, 26.9% had a qualification of honors or bachelor's degree, 3.9% were Ph.D.'s. The study constituted of 57.7% of professionals and 42.3 % of students. 69.2% of the participants were from the age of 20-29, 19.2% of the participants were from the age group of 30-39, and 11.6% of the participants were above the age of 40 years. As per the USD (\$) exchange value for Indian currency 67.9 (INR) in December 2016. 46.1% of the participants belonged to the annual income category of \$(1472.75 - 4418.26), 34.6% of the participants belonged to the category of \$(4418.27- 7363.77), 7.7% participants belonged to the category of \$(7363.78-10309.27) and 11.6% of the participants belonged to the category of above \$ 10,801.00. While profiling of the participants we found that 76.9% of the participants were unmarried and 23.1% of the participants were married.

The discussions were moderated by an expert moderator (researcher in qualitative domain, with a post-doctoral knowledge on the qualitative research techniques). The questions that were framed for the discussion are detailed here in Appendix 1. The audio recordings were facilitated by using a smartphone. There were three passive participants across the four FGDs. The moderator assumed that they were not able to articulate and contribute to the required extent, as they felt they couldn't voice over the opinions of other participants. The participants were not appraised on the topic prior to the real-time event, in order to avoid an inherent bias during the discussion, and also to minimize the interaction effect. This approach would facilitate in identifying and arriving at more diverse views to assist in comparing the results across individual participants within and across the groups (Belk et al., 2012; Morgan, 1998).

Thematic Analysis

While taking an exploratory stance, it was essential to plan the kind of analysis for the qualitative study. Here we have conducted a thematic analysis (Benner, 1985; Leininger, 1985; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984), as there is a lack of sufficient literature within the Indian context. Although there is not extensive literature which has explored the procedure in conducting a thematic analysis, we have diligently followed the instructions prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The participant narrations were gathered by conducting focus group discussions. The codes and themes were generated from FGDs, which is a procedure most commonly used as part of the qualitative technique (Chenail, 1995). The thematic analysis seeks identifiable themes that evolve out of the discussions or narrations from the participants.

There are two kinds of thematic analysis: one is inductive and the other is theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An inductive approach is also called the "bottom up" way, and the theoretical or deductive analysis is also called the "top down" way (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In an inductive mechanism, the themes that are identified from the narratives are heavily linked to the data itself (Patton, 1990) and would sound like grounded theory. The data that is collected through an interview or a focus group discussion might have a vague relationship to the specific questions that were sought from the participants and would not have any specific relationship to the topic of investigation. The inductive analysis is a mechanism of coding data without having a pre-existing coded framework; it would have been preconceived by the researcher. Hence, this kind of thematic analysis becomes data driven whereas the theoretical thematic analysis would be structured by the researcher's theoretical underpinnings and understanding of the research area of interest or previously established theoretical phenomenon. A simultaneous and sequential use of the two approaches are

permissible in a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Here in the stud, we have attempted both approaches of thematic analysis.

The participant voices were audio recorded for the purpose of data collection (Spradley, 1979). The audio recordings were transcribed into Word documents and were edited numerous times to check for potential errors. Each coding item was given due acknowledgment and attention during the coding process. The coding process was comprehensive and inclusive. Relevant extracts for all the themes were collated. The themes were repeatedly cross checked with the code sheet. The coding mechanism ensured that themes are distinctive, coherent, and consistent (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Table 1: Consolidated View of Responses with the Themes and Codes

Themes/Dimensions	Codes	FGD1	FGD2	FGD3	FGD4	Total Count
Intention/ Purchase of Apparel	Choice of store/brand	18	7	8	16	49
	Choice of Material	13	11	14	8	46
	Type of Attire	4	10	3	4	21
	Occasion for Purchase	4	4	11	9	28
Product Knowledge and Involvement	Episodic Knowledge	8	9	9	2	28
	semantic Knowledge	2	3	4	1	10
	Price	17	22	18	19	76
	Certification/labelling/Tags	24	1	13	6	44
	Aware of product and Production Process	8	5	45	4	62
	Quality and Comfort	13	12	17	14	56
	Durability	2	2	2	3	9
	Not Aware	0	12	14	2	28
Attitude	Positive	20	14	25	4	63
	Negative	6	4	22	1	33
Environmental Knowledge	Conscious	10	3	17	1	31
	Not So Conscious	0	0	1	1	2
Subjective Norms	Family Influence	6	3	2	2	13
	Societal Influence	5		2	6	13
Perceived Behavioral Control	Control Belief	7		3	1	11
	Perceived Behavioral Effectiveness	6	2	5	1	14
Skepticism	Issues on Maintenance	10	6	11	0	27
	Lack of Trust on the claims	18	5	22	0	45

Source: Compiled from the FGD analysis in QDA miner lite 4 software (2016).

Using the software QDA Miner Lite4, themes were highlighted to easily identify codes from the transcripts and later were categorized to assign codes (Aronson, 1995; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The TpB model was conceptually applied for the purpose of the theoretical thematic analysis approach and the codes were assigned from the theoretical constructs in the TpB model. During the inductive thematic analysis, we identified new dimensions/codes like product knowledge and involvement, environmental knowledge and skepticism, along with sub dimensions or codes to each of these (as shown in Table 1). The theoretical thematic approach had knowledge edifices from the literature review as detailed in the review section (Aronson, 1995; Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the initial coding, it was re-coded with the expert observations of the reviewers who supervised in refurbishing through the expert coding process (Moretti, et al., 2011).

Individual codes, like preconscious attention and focal attention, were eliminated as the themes could not be categorically assigned to these codes. Certification, Labeling, Tags, and Quality and comfort had a standalone arrangement in the initial coding stage but was grouped based on the analogous nature of the responses.

Results

The outcome of the study is analyzed and discussed in light of the literature referred to in the initial part of the literature review. In the first part of the findings, we present the findings from the FGDs in line with the literature review. In the second part, we discuss the corroborating and contradicting aspects of the literature that evolved as an outcome of the FGD.

Ratifying the TpB model and extending it to conceptualize with the additional constructs to elucidate the different themes, it evolved as an outcome of the two approaches of the thematic analysis.

Intention to Purchase Organic Apparel

The basic decision criteria that the participants considered for the purchase of organic apparel or apparel by itself are based on these: material/fabric, choice of store or brand, type of attire, and occasion to purchase. The material that is comfortable for the skin is a prominent phenomenon stated by the participants. The professionals within the age group of 30-39 years specifically named cotton, jute, linen, handloom, organic/pure cotton, natural handloom, silk, and Khadi as some of the most preferred and used material.

Yes, so if it was initially only (err) cotton then towards organic cotton and then linen, especially for the gents, linen is now of the style statement. Though they have started wearing it very recently only, (err) I have heard many men say that they find linen comfortable. And (err) linen is also largely used by women. Similarly, (err) in the case of silk (err), now lightweight silk, soft silks, if you ask me, I like silk sarees.

They suggested these fibers as best and comfortable:

Organic like for the same brand I have Fabindia (err) I have seen silk material and (err) they . . . they are also quite good. Other than the that, we had a shop called Thakur(umm) who used to produce, who used to provide (err) the silk sarees, the ones that Fabindia had (err) the texture was different, the color was different, and it and it looked when my Mom used to wear it, we used to wear it had a different outlook.

This draws insights pointing towards material conscious consumers.

Excepting few participants, the majority were found to be brand conscious who prefer shopping from branded stores at the malls, retail outlets, and boutiques. "I have certain brands, but not focusing only for brands (err) it's for quality (err), quality and branding is also interrelated."

Some participants stated that they visit trade shows and purchase from Khadi emporiums and are satisfied and assured of the credibility of the product offered.

So in my case if it is for (err) if I am purchasing for the others (err) it is normally occasion based and for myself it is mostly impulse buying (laugh), so for myself

it's mostly impulse buying and (err), I (err) I don't take a decision alone, very rarely do I buy anything for myself alone and (err) it is like when you visit some place and you find something good and you buy it like it you buy it and (err) especially my husband plays a major role in what I wear (laugh). So (err) he tends to try out new brands, he encourages me to try out new brands and all that and yes over a period of time yes, I have my own favorite brands but that doesn't make me (err) (umm) less open to trying out new things, I do try out new type of clothes, new shops and all that, but, generally I have preference for cotton dresses.

Participants who reported that they aren't brand conscious, are keen on making a choice from an authentic source to procure materials/apparels. "I go for (err) normal (err) khadi materials." "I was based in Calcutta, (err) so there we have khadi emporiums (err) where (err) they give quality khadi materials."

Being Indian consumers, there is an inherent choice by the participants for Chudidhars, Kurtas, Kurtis, Sarees, Casual Shirts and Pants, and Formal Pants and Shirts.

I am a shopaholic (laugh). Regarding clothes, I have a huge wardrobe (err). I wear all kinds of clothes all kind of clothes like be it western or (err) Indian, depending on like where to wear for like the church, (err) I prefer Indian (err) Churidar and (err) maybe jeans or Kurti.

The participants narrated that they shop for apparel during occasions like festivals, marriages, birthdays, official meetings, and other gatherings.

As I said (err), dressing it depends on the occasion for everyone so, for (err) regular wear cotton is fine, but when it comes to occasions like marriages (err) and all (err), we often find that cotton dresses they (err) don't give the elegance that (err) maybe silk or something (err) else gives. So (err) that time we go for other materials.

Subjective Norms

Mostly all respondents voiced their opinion that they make consumption choices based on social pressure or after social confirmation. Some participants responded that family and society influenced and inspired them to consume organic apparel. Some also stated that friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors are a source of motivation—creating a positive attitude towards consuming organic apparel.

Whatever the clothes I have, it is based on my friends' suggestions. Means after their views, they might be knowing that how is that, so they will be giving me good ideas. So mostly I used to get suggestions from my friends and (err) through some brands, brands that have (long pause).

Perceived Behavioral Control

This construct measures two dimensions: one is control belief and the other is perceived behavioral effectiveness. It explains the level of inertia to exercise the choice in spite of constraints in the environment. 16% participants (code: control belief in Table 1) had reacted

stating that they were constrained by availability in certain situations when they wanted to exercise their option of purchasing organic/organic apparel.

It's like (err) had function in my home and (err) I need to wear a good dress for my function. It was my cousin's wedding so (err). The at the (err) pre-wedding only (err) I went for the shopping. But the (err) thing that I wanted (err), I didn't get the pure cotton, so (err) I just changed to the other types of the materials what were available in that store (err) and (err) I bought that (err) and used that.

Five participants gave the reasoning that merchandises not being available at reasonable cost catering to the segment of the population, thereby constraining the final behavior.

For me, once I gone with a, my friend in Fabindia (err), they are providing (err) organic dresses. When (err) I looked (err), I gone with her and when we have seen a Kurti (err), it's very dull and (err) the color is not good. But (err) when we asked (err) about the price, it began from (err) 1,500 to 3,000 range. Then (err) we asked why it is that much range (err), then the (err) sal (err) salesgirl told us that it is organic, organic (err) purely jute dress.

The participants expressed their willingness to go to any extent to ensure that they always buy organic apparel and will explore all options through brick and mortar stores and online store channels to purchase organic apparel. Participants also narrated that to behold organic consumption practices, one will have to compromise on certain aspects like color, design, and flamboyant look to contribute to a larger cause consciously.

If you are really bound (err) on getting an organic product and (err) my conscious principle (err) now I am not being able to do it. (err) I told you I want to use only white and light-colored garments more (err) now that at least that dye thing is also taken care of, and (err) that is my little bite that I can do to the environment (err). I cannot talk (err) about a total environmental change or contribution to the global warming or not that (err), but at least that little bit or my family's little bit slowly (err). But right now, because of my profession and (err) what my job requires, (err) and how my social image is, (err) I cannot go into that (err). But (err) perhaps if we all try to go little (err) less flashy (err) in (err) the way we dress and all (err), I think we can achieve (err) (noise) li- (err) little bit.

Attitude

Respondents who expressed a favorable opinion are not extremely concerned about price; they are conscious about the environmental effects and were inclined to contribute to the environment—not for selfish motives but to genuinely contribute to the noble cause of protecting the ecosystem. They expressed their wish to see natural things exist for a longer time to benefit the future generations. Some participants within the age group of 20 to 29 years, who are in the formative stages of their professional life, claimed that they could not afford the price and voiced their willingness to purchase if the price is lowered to suit the common man's share of the wallet.

I am a person (err) I and my family also (err) we try to be organic in whatever means, like for (err) food and (noise), it is pure selfish motive (laugh) so that it

does less (ah) harm to us (err), so that (err) what we intake also we try to keep it organic. So (err) I have been hearing everybody's discussion and I think it is the availability is what (err) is a concern, rather than the price. So I can get organic (err) without a certificate from a home (err) if it is vegetable (err), somebody's terrace garden is also an organic source of vegetable for me. Similarly, (err) like you said there is a village and people weave there (err) and if I happen to visit sometime there then I can go and (err) get it from the source and (err) I, I don't need a certificate and I don't need (err) to pay a premium there. When you are talking about getting the same stuff from a (err) retail outlet it's a problem where you have a problem where you have to get a certificate for authenticity or unique (err) you need to pay a higher price as a margin for the dealership or for (err) their franchisee (err) network cost (err), that is where you end up paying a premium. If there are more products available (err) at more option (err) then (err) there is a (err) I feel, yes (err) yes, I am aware of much lesser than what you buy it from a retail store (err).

Participants with a negative opinion ironically stated and critiqued the clothing facet of being organic and also mentioned that “if they can contribute to the environment in many other ways, why apparel?” They were of the opinion that people might not notice and acknowledge the worth of the organic apparel they would wear.

In our society, to show you pro (err) pro environmentalism there are many other options (err) better options, more visible options than wearing an organic shirt (err), so if you are committed to the environment you can show it in many other ways, because the (err) of course, (err) if you want to improve your personality by being prone to environment, there are many other good options available (err) and this is one option which I am spending more and may not be noticed by many people also people also (err) (laugh), soooo (err) why (err), so that's why (err).

Participants who had maintained a consistency in vouching for the organic/organic consumption had a positive attitude as contrasted against others who were very few in number.

Product Knowledge and Involvement

Participants within the age group of 20 to 39 years evinced an intrinsic motivation to be involved with the organic apparel based on their episodic and semantic knowledge associated with their awareness level about the production process of apparels, certification and labeling aspects, price, quality, comfort, and durability. 63% expressed a positive opinion towards organic apparel by narrating their past experiences where they had unfavorable situations after using conventional garment not made of natural fibers. Close to 5 participants expressed having irritation and rashes on the skin. “I have this allergy problem right from (err) my mother's side. Even she uses cotton. So (err) I (err) prefer more of cotton materials which are again (err) doesn't have much of chemicals and all (err) and (err) not dark colors and all (err).”

There were narrations quoting on the experiences that were shared and passed on to them by word of mouth through their parents, grandparents, and relatives. A participant narrated how the older generation reacts to conventional apparel as against the new apparels that have synthetic mix.

Some grandparents only prefer to buy from dresses from (err) “Kaiteri” because they think that (err) it is very pure. But when we see that materials (err), we don’t feel anything. We will think that (err) it is a (err) very waste because (err) it is not for the money which they (err) are, (err) the product is not for the money (err) which (err) we are giving it in them, give to them (err), but (err) the quality will be very nice.

A participant recounted that the water usage to wash organic apparel is comparatively less.

But here, (err) I have done small experiment (err), when do you use (err) suppose you use a (err) cotton apparel (err) (ah) like a Jubba (err) or a Kurta or something (err) and instead of 10 Kurtas in a washing machine and you put 10 t-shirts in a washing machine, you save a lot of water (err) when you put (err) the plain cotton Kurtas to wash (err). T-shirts takes up (err) lot of water consumption (err) in a machine and it takes lot of time (err) for the direr also to dry it, (err) so it works too (err) to try it (err), maybe we are not factoring in the total cost (err), which we are only worried about whatever is (err) very tangible obvious cost (err). There are lot of other things that we are saving also (err) in the whole process is what I feel. It’s easy to wash (err).

Participants from the age of 20 to 40 had some structured schemas regarding the better cotton initiative (BCI), the price range, the color from natural dye, Khadi is suitable for our weather conditions, and organic apparel will be of standard color and shades with symmetrical prints.

When something new comes (err), for example (err), around 2010 this organic (err) cotton thing started coming up. So, I recently read an article where it was written that (err) around 2014 companies started shifting to (err) this better cotton initiative—BCI, where (err) cotton initiative like textile manufacturing companies like Aravind’s (err) started shifting (err) to that trend, so (err) it was (err) during that time when (err) even my family started thinking of trying out organic something which is labeled as organic and all (err).

The semantic knowledge has been formed in the cognitive networks of consumers and they are largely price sensitive. The participants in the FGD responded on similar lines stating that organic apparels are priced high; they were deliberating whether it should be priced high or asking why it was so highly priced.

But I have a doubt, the pricing (err), we were talking about the costing side right (err). Is there premium price for organic clothes (err) just because of the word organic (err)? (Noise) yes, like you have it in the case of vegetables and all (err) so that is the impression that we have you know so in something which is worth 100 rupees is sold for 500 rupees (err) and just because the word organic is there.

Four participants had a contradictory view to this and thought that apparels purchased from cities like Kolkata, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Coimbatore, and Gujarat come at a much cheaper price.

It depends upon the (err) place where you, for example, if you go to (err) Gujarat and if you buy (err) those things (err) buy the price is very less comparatively if you buy it from Coimbatore (err). Even in Bengal (err), maybe that’s the reason

(err) you get it for low price because (err) there are cotton growing areas (err) yes (err).

There were views that they are willing to spend more if it is for a social cause. Participants accepted that they comprehend certification analogous to tags and labeling. They were relating it to the long tags that they noticed on these branded organic apparels but weren't keen observant of the certification and certifying body.

Normally (err) compared to other brands, these p- (err) (err) particular brands they have long tags. They are multiple (err) because for example if you buy something in a retail store, it will be having what is (err) is 100%, made in (err) but if you see FabIndia, there would be list of things (err) no animal tested (err), no (err) organic color, no organic dyes (err) you see list of (err), in in (err) but *Isha* doesn't have, they just say natural made fabric, that's it.

When probed further, they admitted not being greatly concerned about the certification aspects. The participants were not aware of SGS (*Société Générale de Surveillance*) and GOTS (*Global Organic Textile Standards*) certification for the organic apparel. They acknowledged by stating that they have been using it and have heard about it, hence, they continue to buy it—ignoring the very elements of the certifications on the tags.

It happens rarely. It, it (err) rarely (err) it doesn't happens, (err) means (err) somehow (err) ya ya ya read (umm) it happens (err) sometimes we just cut it off and (err) put it across (err). We are just sitting next to it and we can pick it up and read it (err). But we don't (err) specifically read normally we (err) normally the tendency is to (mchee) cut it off and throw it away, sometimes it doesn't fall in the dustbin and it is near (err) a bed or something (laugh) he he only then.

Some of them are knowledgeable and are aware of the benefits of organic apparel *vis a vis* the everyday clothes. They stated that there are around 15 chemicals that get used in the production of the standard fiber and seven of them are carcinogens. They narrated that organic apparels are manufactured using natural and organic fibers like organic cotton that are produced without using any harmful pesticides and chemicals. They say that they stretch the focal attention to form an active neural network of schemas to frame an opinion of the source or the vendor of organic apparel.

Ya, I think that is why (err) even today (err) when companies come out with new textile (err) textures (err) they tell that this (err) this has this much of cotton (err) or (err) this doesn't have chemicals. They mention those because (err) people want to know whether they have chemicals or not and (err)there are (err) other factors also like (err), health issues. I had read somewhere that around (err) 15 chemicals (err) that are used for growing cotton (err), around (err) seven of them are believed to be carcinogenic (err). So again (err), growing health issues (err), that is also one factor (err) why people (err) are shifting.

The participants used *quality* analogous to *comfort*. “(Umm) (err) before coming here I was based in Calcutta (err) so there we have khadi emporiums (err) where (err) they give quality khadi materials (err).” Professional women in the age group of 20 to 39 years were conscious about the quality of the apparel as it ensures comfort for the skin and body.

Primary thing is (err) the (err) whether it is comfortable for me (err) if I am comfortable in that dress or not (mchee) (err), so I need my dress to be a (err) little bit loose and (err) all that so (err) that I am able to move (err) freely around (err) and (err) it shouldn't constrain my movement in any way so, that way (err) I look at my comfort level (err).

All participants who showed willingness to invest in organic consumption within the age group of 20 to 29 years were of the opinion that the organic apparel they buy should be durable; it should last long as they are investing on it. They narrated situations where the color of the organic apparel fades off after repeated wash and use—which is a cause of concern.

Even I'll definitely join in the awareness programme, because even when the dress is concern, we really don't know how the color fades (err). If—If that is the resisting (err), if that is (err) good advantage: “What are the advantages associated with all of (err) these organic products (err)?” If you buy a normal dress, (err) we have the fear like when the color will fade or (err) something of that sort (err). If organic products can (err) be of good advantage (err) when compared to this (err).

28% of the participants in the FGD said that they were aware of organic vegetables and edible products, but they were not aware of the apparel in the organic form. Participants stated that they had seen jute bags. “I have heard about the jute bags, jute bags and so on and many other items I have seen. Clothing I haven't seen. But I have seen this jute bags and all (err).”

They also reiterated that they have not come across any initiatives from the government to create awareness about organic apparel.

When we talk about environment, we talk about plastic and all, where government has got some measures on to control the use of plastics and all, (noise) similarly in—in (err) the case of clothes we have never heard of any communication in those lines. Every day we see awareness campaigns on plastics and (err) other things, (noise) but in the terms of clothes we hardly get to see (err).

Mostly all participants seemed environmentally conscious and agreed that they will not do anything to harm the environment. “(Umm). Environment issues while disposing off (err). (umm) when the cloths are disposed off (err), what we believe is that the organic materials will (err) get decomposed faster, it won't affect the environment. So that is (err) one aspect (err) of being organic (long pause).”

The participants are aware of the global warming and hazards of using non-organic clothing material which might not readily decompose into the soil. They also reported that textile industry is a major pollutant to the environment and it is high time that people realize the importance of consuming organic apparel. In fact, there were hardly any participants who expressed their ignorance or stated that they aren't conscious about the environment.

I know (umm) pollution is certainly happening because you know silk we are majorly silk is segregating from these cocoons(err), so (err) so all these waste are spreading in this soil and (err) having some environment problem, an article has come in the newspaper, that the (err) the textile industry is (err)(err) and the environment pollution caused by the textile industry and same like this gold industry(err). Gold (err) is not our topic(err), so (umm) (err) this (err) textile

waste are coming directly to the soil (err) and also it is spreading to the rivers (err) rivers also (err) so contamination of water(err) and, thus the pollution is also happening.

Skepticism

Participants had a wide-ranging skepticism regarding the complexities associated with maintaining the organic apparel. They say that it has to be hand washed and it creates discomfort for working women, especially to always hand wash it rather than doing a machine wash. They were concerned that the cotton material will look inept if not starched during every wash. If that starch turns out to be a chemical, then what is the point of buying an organic material in the first place?

Sometimes in certain situations (err)it doesn't suit my body because(err) Khadi and all have lots of fold and all and the wrinkles, (err) doesn't go off. And gone gone (err) ya, if I'm going to attend a function and all (err), once once (err)I get dressed up and go to travel and all (err), by the time I'm at the function I'll be sweating(err). Those cases and all (err), these pure cotton things(err) like khadi and all those things (err), it doesn't (err)give that fresh look.

Because if I cannot put it in the washing machine along with (err) everything else. I would find it difficult as a working woman.

I have tried. I have 2 . . . 3, I have right now in my wardrobe 2 . . . 3 Kadhi apparels, (err) I find that it is (err) as good as cotton but any branded organic cotton apparel (err) but (err) It requires lot of maintenance, but I mean it (err) you have to starch it and then (noise) it is little more thicker than the Linen (err) fabric or cotton mixed linen fabrics so therefore (err) it's not all that comfortable for your daily wear but (err) I have (err) seen my grandfather and all continuously using Khadi shirts and the (err) they were (err) very specific that they wanted a particular kind of sleeves (err) I think it was not three fourth and it was not half also (err) ya below the elbow ya so he was very particular (err) and I have seen both my grandparents used only Kadhi always, so there should be something in it is good for our weather conditions in Kerala.

A vast majority were skeptical about the claims and did not trust the claims announced by these organic apparel vendors. They were doubtful on how to identify which is organic and which is not. They also stated that in the Indian context, the certifying agency does not take a conscious effort in devising stringent regulations on the producers and manufacturers. The Indian consumers have a perception and a preconceived notion that the certifying agencies are a just, regulatory body which does not have stringent norms and policy and do not take punitive actions against defaulters. The following are excerpts from FGD:

So (err) in some regions they might be preferring organic (err), but, there might be some people (err) who use all these kind of chemicals (err). So, you can't be (err) 100% sure that it is 100% pure cotton (err). So, there might be people (err)with issue even with the organic (err) apparels. There might be cases where people have issues (err) even if it is organic apparels (err) ya, but (err) no (err) it's not like that. (Laugh).

Again, when you think about Indian context (err), in India (err) again certificates are being viewed skeptically by many customers, ah ya (err) because we have lot of evidences which says that certificates can be created(err), so the authenticity of the certifying agencies which gives the certification is (err) a matter of(err) concern.

Discussion

The study proved to have corroborating and contradicting evidences in terms of certain established phenomenon as observed from TpB model. At the same time, we have inductively arrived at some other dimensions that can better explain consumers intention to purchase organic apparel in the Indian context.

As stated in the literature, subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991) and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; Straughan & Roberts, 1999) theoretically had a significant relationship on purchase intention for organic products and were supported by the themes that evolved from the discussion. While stating assumptions based on the literature on attitude (Ajzen, 1991; Hovland & Rosenberg, 1960; Katz & Stotland, 1959), it was also noted that a consumer with a positive attitude will have a disposition to engage in organic apparel purchase, but the same attitude may be dampened by skepticism (this dimension evolved out of the theme). The consumers sounded cynical about the false claims made by the marketers. The participants with a positive attitude expressed having elicited their intention to purchase organic apparel consistent with the literature. They stated that a positive attitude can trigger purchase intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009; Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988).

A few other dimensions evolved through the inductive thematic analysis: product knowledge and involvement, which was evidenced to have had an explanatory relationship in forming the attitude towards organic apparel, and the themes in the discussion supported the relationship and the capability of this dimension to tailor the attitude of consumers for organic apparel. The themes from the discussion evidenced that though consumers have knowledge about the environmental issues, they needn't necessarily translate it into eliciting a consumption for organic apparel, but they might profoundly elicit organics for an edible product which might cause harm to individual consumption.

There were lot more insights within the sub-codes for each dimension that was selected as primary codes in the discussion. Consumers perpetually do not display an intention when it pertains to the perception about the price of organic apparel although they have a positive attitude for the product. A set of consumers who were not concerned about the price showed their willingness to elicit their behavior in all ways to do good to the environment. Skepticism would play a prominent role and had a greater explanatory power in understanding the attitude and intentions among consumers. The participants pointed out two incredulous issues: one is the herculean task of washing and maintaining these organic apparels, and the other is the lack of trust towards claims calling it "green" and "organic." Indian consumers are generally price sensitive, and they fostered their interest into persuading the intention for organic apparel only if the price is reasonably maintained and catered to middle-class and upper middle-class consumers. It is yet another revelation that though consumers are highly knowledgeable in terms of the environmental hazards, they need not necessarily have a positive disposition for all variants of organic products. 33% of the proportion of the participants expressed that they are conscious about the environment but wouldn't express their predispositions for organic clothing as they would for edible products or recycled products. The participants had knowledge about the product. They were aware of the source of raw materials used for producing organic apparel. But they had a dearth of knowledge regarding the certifying agencies who authenticate these products with tags and labels.

The insights from the discussion on “product knowledge” were deduced from the themes. The participants agreed on having taken advice from friends and family while making a choice of apparel, which is in line with the literature. Participants emphasized that they are constrained by the non-availability of organic apparel in every location, which impedes their opportunity to purchase. This is also validated by the literature. Participants were willing to go an extra mile in purchasing products that favor the environment by revalidating the philosophy of perceived consumer effectiveness as found in the literature. Those participants who had a favorable attitude also had an intention to purchase, but at the same time, they were skeptical about the claims and the products offered by the marketers.

Consumers have specifically shown interest for fabric made from organic cotton, silk, and jute. They seek branded apparel from malls, emporiums, and tradeshows. There is a possibility that consumers purchase behavior will increase substantially if the prices are kept moderate in order to cater to all classes. As stated in the results, the consumers are still not aware of the certifying agencies and regulatory bodies that monitor and regulate organic standards (e.g., Global Organic Textile Standards) and suggest that suitable measures should be taken to create awareness of the benefits of using organic apparel. The marketers can take necessary action to ensure that the products will be made available to the consumers at locations near their vicinity. There is a deficiency of trust in consumers because they generally have a negative perception about the certification, tags, and certifying authorities. This needs to be addressed by creating systems and policies that build knowledge and trust about organic products and their benefits to society and the environment. There is a need for an institutional mechanism (at the national and state-level) to monitor the growth and development of the sector with regulatory interventions to check quality, price and other criteria (e.g., manufacturing standards). There is also a clear case for strengthening the information system to reflect on how vibrant this sector currently is and what potential it can have in the future with a growing trend towards urbanization, environmental protection, and so forth. Policy makers have a long way to go in reassuring the minds of their consumers.

Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the study is that it is done with a small sample and the venue for the FGD is limited to the city of Kochi, Kerala in India; however, the participants span major cities in the country. Generalizability of the data is constrained to the context and area of the study, as studies on consumers have restricted replicability precisely because consumers are dynamic in nature. Triangulation of research methods in the qualitative domain can possibly enrich the insights and serve to revalidate the results to suit a generalized context. Other qualitative research techniques can also be applied with a similar set of participants to revalidate the evidences stated in this paper. Although, a limitation can be considered a future scope of research. Future studies can focus on studying Indian consumers in the context of environmental citizenship behavior or in how environmentally conscious Indian consumers would behave towards organic apparel produced and manufactured in their homeland. Such exploration has not yet been attempted in this study, nor has it yet been attempted in the Indian context.

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Appendix 1

The discussions were framed based on the questions as follows:

- (a) Have they heard of organic apparel?
- (b) What perception elucidates positive intention or behavior?
- (c) Are they aware of any certifications about organic apparel?
- (d) Are there any factors that impede the continuum of the behavior?
- (e) Do consumers who project themselves as environmentally conscious, evince an intention to perform a positive behavior towards the purchase of organic apparel?
- (f) Do they like to be associated with or identified as a person who belong to the group who always buy environmentally sustainable products, including apparel?
- (g) How they perceive price, quality, type of materials, brand, labeling, and other product knowledge attributes before their choice?
- (h) Is there any negative perception towards organic apparel?
- (i) If so, what are the reasons?
- (j) Do others influence the selection or intention to buy organic apparel?
- (k) Does lack of availability of the product impede the behavior?

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