

Research Article

Manifesting Modern-day Consumer Spirituality in Sustainable Development: Time to Bring Personology Theory into Action

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Abstract: Human's mind is a plethora of complexly intertwined emotions, distress, memories of eventful instances and current environmental pressures. Ace psychologist Henry Murray comprehended this in the 1930s, directing his psychoanalytical methods to fathom individual personality psychology, towards idiographic approaches. Murray coined the term "personology" to study an individual's personality, which, according to him is rooted in the brain. He stated that though humans strive for reduction in both psychological and physiological tension, a tension-free state is undesirable as satisfaction occurs in the process of reducing that tension. Spirituality contributes in reducing such tension by developing the personality of an individual, which might substantially affect online consumers' buying choices. Although online consumers tend to buy material goods, spirituality redirects their purchase from conspicuous consumption (Stillman et al., 2012). Such constructive development occurring through meta-belief, (Phipps, 2012) results in utilitarian decisions based on empathetic considerations (Puthillam et al., 2023). Though very vital to identify human's mindsets, Personology Theory is considered as a redundant concept and is under researched. This study is dedicated to the role of personology in understanding modern-day Consumer Spirituality in sustainable development to greater depths. For this, it was required to identify personology factors in sustainability context. Firstly, review of extant literature aided the researchers in identifying key personology factors affecting Consumer Spirituality in sustainable development. Based on this, data was proposed to be collected from 400 respondents of Gurugram, Noida, Delhi and Ghaziabad, by self-structured questionnaires. As the significant impact of personology factors affecting Consumer Spirituality were required to be tested, regression was conducted. The researchers recommend that Consumer Spirituality is essential to understand online consumers' buying behaviour and cultural existence, requiring stakeholders' attention. It is an interesting concept for marketers, researchers, and academicians to lay their eyes on.

Keywords: Consumer Spirituality, personology, sustainable development, online consumers, buying behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of Consumer Spirituality

Online shopping has condensed the limitation of accessibility of markets in the vicinity (Jaller and Pahwa, 2020). The merits associated online shopping not only make it simpler to obtain a desired product within a specified period of time (Pantano et.al, 2021), but also gives an opportunity to compare an assortment of items under single canopy (Chetioui et.al, 2020). More importantly, Dincer & Dincer (2015) explained the extent to which customers are satisfied is directly related to motivational attitudes towards online shopping or towards specific online shops. Finding detailed knowledge about these has enticed researchers to opt for multi-disciplinary studies like linking consumer perceptions to economics, finance, psychology etc. One such concept gaining attention is Consumer Spirituality.

Consumer Spirituality involves the practices and approaches consumers undertake while purchasing goods, services, and experiences that provide spiritual utility i.e., giving them inner peace. This concept replicates the growing desire among consumers to find meaning, determination, and link with themselves via consumption

choices (Husemann & Eckhardt, 2019). Marketing and consumer behavior researchers have an opportunity to get information about consumers' requirements for such goods in today's arena, so that goods and services can be designed accordingly.

Fundamentals of Personology Theory

Henry Alexander Murray was a patron of human psychology. He explained personality theory as a set of continuing tendencies that aid individuals in adapting to life. He further elaborated this by combining psychology with personality coining a term "personology." It is the study of personality from holistic viewpoint. A being's actions and reactions, sentiments, personal and social functioning can be understood in terms of a whole person rather than specific urged retorts. He stated that though humans strive for reduction in both psychological and physiological tension, a tension-free state is undesirable as satisfaction occurs in the process of reducing that tension. Personology theory postulates that personality is formed by an amalgamation of inherent needs, motives, and environmental influences. Various psychogenic needs, such as achievement, affiliation, and power, affect human behavior. Understanding these needs and how they manifest in consumer behavior can provide valuable

insights into the role of personality in spiritual consumption. He added that personality mediates a person's environmental demands too. It also specifies how the concepts of this theory can aid in comprehending Consumer Spirituality to judge consumers' mindsets about sustainability.

Era of Sustainable Development

India is one of the leading developing nations that have gained global business exposure in the recent times. With enormous untapped opportunities, businesses focus on ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) factors for successful operation. This is evident with continuous efforts to reduce carbon footprint, investing in eco-friendly agriculture practice to maintain food quality, idolizing CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and startups encouraging sustainable transportation solutions, recycling materials etc. (EY, 2023). This proves that the future of business is taking it towards the sustainable path.

Sustainable development requires to meet present generation's needs, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It incorporates sync between dimensions such as economy, society and environment. Today's online consumer has become aware of maintaining ecological balance and the value that sustainable development brings in his/her life. Due to this, consumer behavior plays a critical role in attaining sustainable development goals by integrating spiritualism and personality-induced drives can augment sustainable consumption (United Nations, 2015).

Objectives

The study aims to explore the factors affecting Consumer Spirituality and their impact on Spirituality.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Spirituality is the act of seeking answers to metaphysical, moral, fundamental and existential questions (Ongaro et al., 2023). It is an evolving social phenomenon affected by existent reality (Bahodirovna, 2022). So, it's quite fundamental that ethical issues are partly affected by spirituality which is independent of religiosity and religious beliefs (Vitell et al., 2018; Zhu & Rajah, 2023). Since consumption is a major part of human existence, corporates require interpreting consumer need transformation due to health concerns, resource mobilization, economic

fluctuations and even spiritually conscious buying (Mehta et al., 2020). Goswami et al. (2025) suggested an interesting aspect by their cross-cultural research, proving that though spirituality is a moral anchor promoting green purchase intentions, information avoidance creates cognitive dissonance in shoppers' minds. On the contrary, exhibition creates a bridge to represent profane products as ritualistic transcendence and cultural identity symbols (Güneş & Ercömert Görgün, 2024). This generally happens because consuming the spiritual is considered as a coping mechanism to deal with mundane problems, embodied and material consumption, sustainability over consumption issues (Santana, 2022).

Relying on reviews for cognizance before planning to spend on products that offer them peace, balance, authenticity and renewal for collective consciousness (Hommerberg & Lindgren, 2023) is another way of practicing Consumer Spirituality. This further develops empathetic feelings towards nature creating a positive impact of eco-spiritual attitude, perceived behavioural control and subjective norms on sustainable consumption behaviour. Baumgartner (2002) mentions though personality psychology has dispelled the notions of theorizing and atheoretical empiricism, it has not advanced in consumer research, making it a fringe player (Gohary & Hanzae, 2014). Interestingly, Valor and Martínez-de-lbarreta (2021) revitalize this notion to investigate sustainable lifestyles, which is one of the trend-setters for modern-day consumer. As Rybanská's (2015) research justifies that temperaments and personality traits are strongly linked to emotional behaviour, consumer rationality is affected.

The "psychology of personality" or personology of people was explained by Murray through psychogenic needs. Inspired from them, the researchers selected five, Infavoidance (the tendency of keeping away from embarrassment or disgrace), Exhibition (making an impact on people through actions), Cognizance (being curious for knowledge and asking questions to gain it), Tension (taken specifically to monitor whether a condition free of tension is desirable or the process of reducing it) and Empathy (understanding the value of ecological and environmental health in sustainable development). The dependency of Consumer Spirituality on these Personology theory-induced factors is put to test.

METHOD

Self-structured questionnaires were filled by consumers from Gurugram, Noida, Delhi and Ghaziabad cities of north-central region, India. These are metropolises, infrastructurally advanced and have average literacy beyond 80% (Population Census, 2023) indicating knowledge about varied goods and services, commercial organizations offering sustainable and/or eco-friendly products. The questionnaires were construed based on Hardt et al. (2012), Quoquab & Mohammad (2019) and Kelland (2025) for factors affecting Consumer Spirituality, sustainable consumption behaviour and psychogenic needs of Murray respectively. To collect the data, a sample size of 400 was calculated based on Godden's formula (2004).

At first, extant literature review helped to explore the factors affecting Consumer Spirituality in sustainable development. The factors were chosen because of their possible impact on consumer spirituality in sustainable development context. The following hypothesis were framed, followed by its sub-hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant impact of factors affecting on Consumer Spirituality.

- $H_{01.1}$: There is no significant impact of factor affecting infoavoidance on Consumer Spirituality.
- $H_{01.2}$: There is no significant impact of factor affecting exhibition on Consumer Spirituality.
- $H_{01.3}$: There is no significant impact of factor affecting cognizance on Consumer Spirituality.
- $H_{01.4}$: There is no significant impact of factor affecting tension on Consumer Spirituality.
- $H_{01.5}$: There is no significant impact of factor affecting empathy on Consumer Spirituality.

The impact of the factors on Consumer Spirituality was assessed by multiple linear regression. It was chosen because it allowed the researchers to examine the combined influence of multiple independent variables i.e., infoavoidance, exhibition, cognizance, tension and empathy on the dependent variable Consumer Spirituality. The model specification of multiple linear regression can be represented as:

$$\text{Consumer Spirituality} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Infoavoidance}) + \beta_2 (\text{Exhibition}) + \beta_3 (\text{Cognizance}) + \beta_4 (\text{Tension}) + \beta_5 (\text{Empathy})$$

The data analysis summary followed by the model summary is stated below, which proves the explanatory power and overall significance of the regression model:

Table 1: Data analysis summary

Predictor	β Coefficient	Std. Error	t- Value	P Value	Result
Infoavoidance	0.152	0.045	3.38	0.001	Significant
Exhibition	0.081	0.038	2.12	0.035	Significant
Cognizance	0.204	0.050	4.10	0.000	Significant
Tension	-0.032	0.041	-0.78	0.434	Not Significant
Empathy	0.265	0.043	6.16	0.000	Significant

Source: The Authors

Table 2: Model summary

Statistic	Value
R^2	0.48
Adjusted R^2	0.47
F-Statistic	45.3
p-Value (overall)	0.001

Source: The Authors

Multiple linear regression analysis highlights that infoavoidance has a significant impact on Consumer Spirituality ($p = 0.001$), though not very strong. Exhibition impacts Consumer Spirituality more significantly and positively ($p = 0.035$). Though cognizance's impact is also significant ($p = 0.000$), but it's not too influential. Tension impacts insignificantly ($p = 0.434$), and empathy's impact is mildly significant ($p = 0.000$).

RESULTS

In terms of personology, infoavoidance is when humans act in a typical way to save themselves from embarrassment and disgrace. As exhibition refers to creating an impact through actions, they invest in such products to prove the way they lead their lives, promoting a healthy living. Large chunks of information availability have made them aware so cognizance makes them question what and how they consume but it is applicable for self-aware consumers. It is interesting to point how the process of reducing tension is more satisfying than a mere reduced state. This recommendation of Murray is proved by the current study results, making its impact on Consumer Spirituality, insignificant. Empathy arises from sensitivity toward

sustainable development thus consuming products that provide spiritual utility. As per the results, they subconsciously practice Consumer Spirituality, buying products that are eco-friendly and nature preserving.

These results are vital for psychologists, marketers and branders in comprehending a modern consumer's mind which chiefly idealizes specific brand choices and earns their loyalty in this tough competitive world.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Getting information about online buyers' views towards spirituality might result in developing novel techniques for consumer retention by marketers and brand owners.

Through this data, progress becomes possible (Beckers et al., 2018) and the prevailing marketing tactics and transactional modifications existing in online shopping can be understood in greater depths. The findings suggest that integrating personology-related values and Consumer Spirituality can endorse sustainable consumption.

Online marketers should accentuate ethical and ecological/organic/environment friendly products, while policymakers can develop initiatives that reverberate consumers' spiritual and personality-driven impetuses. Incorporating these findings into organizational working systems can foster a deeper understanding of promoting sustainability. This is a brilliant combination of generating profitable business, destressing online consumers and undertaking corporate social responsibility in one go.

Today's hi-tech world of smart shopping and virtual markets, has provoked managers and researchers to take the route of novel concepts impacting consumption. By utilizing the results of this study, online marketers can get an opportunity to reconnoitre Consumer Spirituality from an invigorated perspective, using influential personology factors and its propensity to manipulate and impact sustainable choices on calculable terms, directly empowering seekers of consumer needs and desires.

Limitations and Future Scope

The researcher's prime focus was on finding possible relations between online Consumer Spirituality and Personology theory to promote sustainable development. Moreover, this study covers the key facets of human's personality psychology, foregoing the possible industry-specific fluctuations. Due to time constrictions and limited monetary availability, only a few most influential factors were chosen (based on existing literature). The future research directions in this regard can take various forms, contributing in different fields of academic literature. The researchers recommend future academicians to diversify the assessment levels by working on different types of commodities or services like FMCG goods, wellness retreats, garment-making, luxury items etc. There is a great scope for cross-cultural comparisons, longitudinal studies and holistic models, opening new arenas for consumer behaviour research.

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