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When the Going Gets Tough: Motivations of Customer Helpers' Further Green Helping Behavior Intentions

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ABSTRACT

Environmental conservation is a global concern. Consumers may contribute by persuading their reluctant peers to support green purchasing, but these influencers need to persevere when their advice is not followed. This study provides more insight into the cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors influencing further green helping behavior intentions. Survey data were collected from 452 green product supporters who previously advised someone about green purchasing behavior. Six hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling and bootstrapping. Affective commitment toward fellow customers and green helping behavior in general influences further green helping behavior intentions. Subjective norm and perceived behavioral control only have an indirect influencing effect through green helping behaviors in general. Businesses should focus on customers engaging in green helping behavior in general, as they are likely to persevere when "the going gets tough" with other customers. Overall, the study advances knowledge on the Theory of Planned Behavior's application in a green helping behavior context.

Keywords: *Environmental conservation, green purchasing, helping, Theory of Planned Behavior*

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Environmental sustainability has become a global common goal (Jianping et al., 2013, p. 3). Being environmentally sustainable implies "doing business in a way that reduces waste,

conserves energy and promotes environmental health-preventing damage to the natural environment" (Walsh and Dodds, 2017, p. 672). Numerous factors underscore the importance of preserving the earth's natural resources. For example, one of the most serious environmental concerns involves climate change. Increased carbon emissions in the atmosphere contribute to global warming, and subsequently rising sea levels and extreme droughts (Dube, Nhamo, and Chikodzi, 2020). Developing countries are especially perceived to be at risk of the negative effects of climate change, as their growth prospects are most affected (Gunarathne, Kaluarachchilage, and Rajasooriya, 2020, p. 2). Other pressing matters include using resources at a pace faster than restoration (Al-Swidi and Saleh, 2021, p. 13437) as well as the need for better forest management (Salam, 2020, p. 149), agriculture (Ulian et al., 2020, pp. 422-423) and aquaculture (Ahmed, Thompson, and Glaser, 2019, pp. 160-161). Forest conservation is threatened by factors like diseases and fires (Salam, 2020, p. 149), while biodiversity is threatened by the need to feed the earth's growing population (Ulian et al., 2020, p. 422). Additionally, increased global fish production may contribute to a reduction in land and freshwater resources, demolition of habitats, and water pollution, to name a few (Ahmed, Thompson, and Glaser, 2019, pp. 160-161).

Given the growing concern for environmental conservation, countries have deployed several initiatives globally to promote sustainability. Some of the previously employed initiatives include the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Development Programme (Tolliver, Keeley, and Managi, 2019), the Group of Seven Summit's agenda on climate change (BBC, 2021), and the COP 26 UN Climate Change Conference (United Nations, 2021). Although often politically charged, each of these agreements is predicated upon an acknowledgement that issues hindering sustainability need to be – or rather *must be* – addressed.

Overall, the success of these initiatives is also dependent on customers' willingness to engage in green purchasing behavior. Government and business interventions will have little success if customers still engage in unsustainable consumption practices. Green purchasing behavior is defined as the "affirmative selection and acquisition of products and services that most effectively minimize negative environmental impacts over their life cycle of manufacturing, transportation, use and recycling or disposal" (Vazifehdoust et al., 2013, p. 2490). Subsequently, extant literature supports involving customers endorsing green purchasing and encouraging them to engage in green helping behaviors and assist other customers who are reluctant to make green purchases. Messages from credible fellow customers may be more successful than direct persuasive attempts from firms (Van Tonder, Fullerton, and De Beer, 2020, pp. 1-2).

However, of further interest to this study is the reality that customers may not always accept the help or advice of other customers on green purchasing and may continue to choose more environmentally unfriendly product alternatives. Considering the growing need for sustainability worldwide, giving up on customers ignoring help or advice from customer helpers is also not an option. It remains critical for customer helpers to persevere and continue educating and proactively helping other customers to ensure that they engage in green purchasing behaviors.

Accordingly, scholars and practitioners may benefit from an advanced understanding of factors that may influence customer helpers to persevere and continue helping other customers who previously ignored their advice about green purchasing. Extant research provides little guidance on these matters. For the most part, prior research has mainly concentrated on factors contributing to customers voluntarily assisting other customers in a green environment (Hwang and Lyu, 2020; Van Tonder, Fullerton, and De Beer, 2020, pp. 1-2). Little is known about the underlying motivations for why customer helpers would not give up and intend to continue helping other customers who did not act on their initial advice about green purchasing. Hence, limited knowledge is available to aid in the design of practical interventions that may promote further interactions between customers and for customer helpers to continue influencing other customers' decisions to engage in green purchasing behaviors.

The aim of the current study is to develop a structural model promoting further green helping behavior intentions to assist in addressing this research gap. The study was guided by earlier research denoting that cognitive, behavioral, and emotional factors may play a significant role in shaping behavioral intentions of customers (Xu and Lin, 2018, p. 245). Subsequently, the research process concerned examining selected cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors, and the extent to which they may contribute to influencing customer helpers to persevere and continue helping other customers who previously ignored their green purchasing advice. Particularly, factors from relationship marketing (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) deemed relevant to influence behavioral intentions of customer helpers were adapted to the research context and further examined in this study.

From a theoretical perspective, the study is important as it contributes to advancing knowledge of the Theory of Planned Behavior in terms of its relevance in the context of further green helping behavior intentions as well as the potential contribution of affective and behavioral factors that have not previously been considered in this model. From a practical perspective, the study may be valuable to businesses challenged by customers' reluctance to engage in green purchases, as knowledge would be gained into the underlying reasons why fellow customers supporting green purchasing may persevere in their attempts to assist other customers to engage in green purchasing behaviors. Moreover, guidance may be obtained on the prioritization of the marketing initiatives that may facilitate these further helping behaviors.

The focus of this review now shifts to the theoretical considerations that provide the linchpins for the current study. As such, this section provides additional insight into the constructs and research hypotheses framing the proposed model. Based on this focus, attention is directed toward two phenomena: green helping behavior in general and one's intentions regarding further green helping behavior. Thereafter, the methodology, findings, and research contributions are addressed. The paper concludes with guidance for further research on this very important topic that may aid in contributing to environmental conservation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Behavioral Factor: Green Helping in General and Further Helping Intentions

Helping is a dimension of customer citizenship behaviors (Yi and Gong, 2013, p. 1280). Customer citizenship behavior concerns the "voluntary and discretionary behaviors that are not required for the successful product and/or delivery of the service but that, in the aggregate, help the service organization overall" (Groth, 2005, p. 11). Additional customer citizenship behavior dimensions include feedback, advocacy, and tolerance of company mistakes (Yi and Gong, 2013, p. 1280).

Effectively, helping behavior relates to providing some form of assistance to other customers (Yi and Gong, 2013, p. 1281). In the context of the current investigation, green helping behaviors were examined as referring to customers assisting other customers if they need help with purchasing green products, teaching them about green product purchasing, and providing advice regarding the purchasing of green products (Yi and Gong, 2013, p. 1281). The construct was further assessed from two perspectives. First, green helping behaviors were examined in relation to customer helpers' intentions to help other customers who ignored their initial advice about green purchasing. Second, the construct was adapted to assist in identifying the extent to which customers engage in green helping behaviors in general.

Knowledge of these matters is essential, as previous research has shown that people tend to repeat past behaviors (Xu and Lin, 2018, p. 248). Past behavior is perceived as the greatest forecaster of future endeavors (Lianto, 2015, p. 121). Moreover, past green behaviors have been found to predict future green behavioral intentions (Lalot et al., 2019, p. 80). Hence, it is plausible that customers who generally engage in green helping behavior practices would also have the intention to engage in further green helping behaviors. Concerning the first relationship in the proposed model, it was therefore hypothesized that:

H1: *Green helping behavior in general positively and significantly influences further green helping behavior intentions.*

Affective Factor: Affective Commitment toward Fellow Customers and Further Helping Intentions

Affective commitment is a dimension of commitment grounded in relationship marketing (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p. 2; Fullerton, 2005, p. 1374). Typical relationship marketing concerns are "attracting, developing, and retaining customer relationships" (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991, p. 133). Affective commitment underscores identification and attachment to another (Fullerton, 2005, p. 1375).

The current study was specifically interested in customers' affective commitment to fellow customers who previously ignored their green purchasing advice. It has been noted that customers may form close bonds with other customers when sharing consumption experiences at several intervals. Additionally, positive interactions with other customers may contribute to positive emotions, owing to social needs, such as affiliation and belonging, being met (Curth, Uhrich, and Bekenstein, 2014, p. 148). This paper further argues that, effectively, customers may also be affectively committed toward fellow customers regardless of positive interactions with them, owing to the fellow customer being a family member, friend or colleague. Consequently,

affective commitment toward fellow customers was examined as emotional attachments toward fellow customers and a sense of loyalty toward them (Curth, Uhrich, and Bekenstein, 2014, p. 11).

Extant research further confirms positive relationships between affective commitment and customer citizenship behaviors, involving customers providing help to other customers (Choi and Lotz, 2018, pp. 620, 628). It has also been noted that affective commitment to a given target serves as a motivational factor to perform actions that would be of benefit to the target in order for the individual to reinforce bonds with the target (Curth, Uhrich, and Bekenstein, 2014, p. 149). Accordingly, it is further likely that customers who are affectively committed toward fellow customers may have the intention to further help them with green purchasing, as it would provide an opportunity for them to reinforce bonds with these customers. Hence, concerning the second relationship in the proposed model, it was hypothesized that:

H2: *Affective commitment toward fellow customers positively and significantly influences further green helping behavior intentions.*

Cognitive Factors: Subjective Norm, Attitudes, and Perceived Behavioral Control, and Further Helping Intentions

Subjective norm, attitudes, and perceived behavioral control are key dimensions of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p. 182), with each component having the potential to influence behavioral intentions and overt behaviors. The theory has been widely applied in research involving green consumer behavior (Askadilla and Krisjanti, 2017; Chen and Tung, 2014; Paul, Modi, and Patel, 2016; Taufique and Vaithianathan, 2018), and subsequently seemed relevant in further assessing behaviors and behavioral intentions from a green customer helper perspective.

Subjective norm relates to "perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). Accordingly, in the context of the current study, subjective norm was examined as pertaining to customers' perceptions that others who are important to them think that they should or would want them to help others requiring assistance with green purchasing decisions (Paul, Modi, and Patel, 2016, p. 131). Perceived behavioral control concerns "the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). Hence, perceived behavioral control was examined in relation to the confidence in one's ability to impart important knowledge to others concerning green purchasing and believing one possesses the expertise required to do so (Cheung and Lee, 2012, p. 224). Attitude concerns "the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). Therefore, in the current research context, attitudes were examined as relating to the thought that purchasing green products is valuable, wise, and rewarding (Varshneya, Pandey, and Das, 2017, p. 12).

With respect to green consumer behavior, collectively, prior research has demonstrated that attitude, subjective norm, and measures of perceived behavioral control may directly influence pro-environmental behavioral intentions as well as ecologically conscious consumer behaviors (Askadilla and Krisjanti, 2017, p. 11; Taufique and Vaithianathan, 2018, p. 51). Accordingly,

from this perspective, it is further plausible to postulate that similar relationships may emanate in the context of the current investigation. Customers believing that other people important to them think they should help others with green purchase decisions may engage in these helping behaviors in general. Likewise, perceptions of others' expectations (subjective norm) may contribute to customers intending to further help customers who previously ignored their advice about green purchasing. Customers who believe they are in control of their behaviors, have confidence in their ability to provide knowledge or information about green purchase decisions, and believe they have the expertise needed to perform these actions are likely to engage in green purchase helping behaviors. Similarly, perceptions of perceived behavioral control may contribute to customers intending to further help customers who previously ignored their advice about green purchasing. Customers with the attitude that purchasing green is valuable, rewarding, and wise may be motivated to help others with purchasing green products in general. Favorable green attitudes may also contribute to customers intending to further help customers who previously ignored their advice about green purchasing. Thus, the following hypotheses were further formulated:

H3: *Subjective norm positively and significantly influences (a) engagement in green helping behavior in general as well as (b) further green helping behavior intentions.*

H4: *Perceived behavioral control positively and significantly influences (a) engagement in green helping behavior in general as well as (b) further green helping behavior intentions.*

H5: *Green attitude positively and significantly influences (a) engagement in green helping behavior in general as well as (b) further green helping behavior intentions.*

Insight into the above matters is important as, along with H1, they further suggest that the three cognitive factors of the Theory of Planned Behavior may both directly and indirectly, through green helping behavior in general, influence further green helping behavior intentions. Therefore, to further assess these relationships, it was finally hypothesized that:

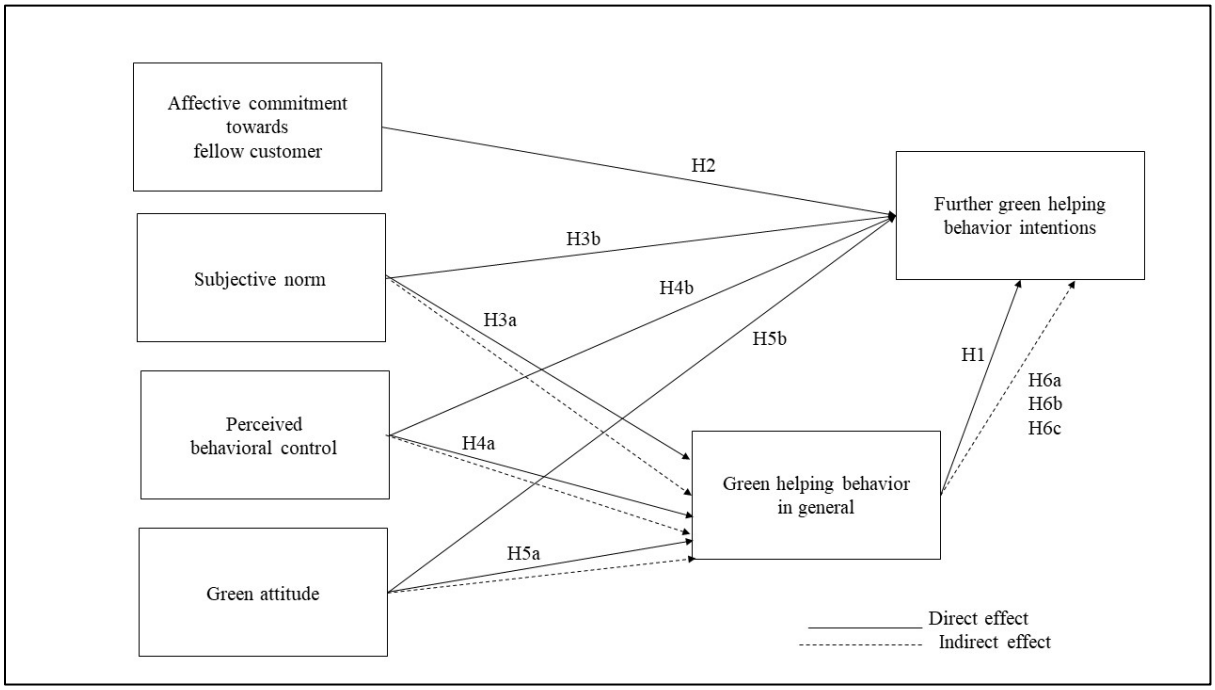
H6a: *Subjective norm has a significant positive indirect effect on further green helping behavior intentions, as mediated by engagement in green helping behavior in general.*

H6b: *Perceived behavioral control has a significant positive indirect effect on further green helping behavior intentions, as mediated by engagement in green helping behavior in general.*

H6c: *Green attitude has a significant positive indirect effect on further green helping behavior intentions, as mediated by engagement in green helping behavior in general.*

The hypotheses formulated for the study are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



METHODOLOGY

The research design was explanatory in nature. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to collect quantitative data from customers older than 18 years, who had made a green purchase in the last year and had also advised someone they knew about green purchasing in the previous 12 months. Consequently, the survey included three screening questions to ensure that only respondents forming part of the target population participated in the study. The fieldwork was conducted by an accredited research agency in South Africa that distributed the online survey to respondents who form part of their research panel and regularly partake in survey projects managed by the agency. Respondents who participated in the study qualified to take part in a lucky draw to win an incentive of marginal value. The respondents were also provided with the option to opt-out of the survey if they chose not to participate in the study. Participation was anonymous.

The survey included six measurement scales that were all previously validated. These scales assessed the respondents' (1) affective commitment toward the fellow customer who previously ignored their advice about green purchasing (Curth, Uhrich, and Bekenstein, 2014); (2) perceived behavioral control (Cheung and Lee, 2012); (3) green attitude (Varshneya, Pandey, and Das, 2017); (4) subjective norm (Paul, Modi, and Patel, 2016); (5) helping behavior (Yi and Gong, 2013), as measured from green helping in general; and (6) further green helping behavior intentions perspectives. All items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale that assessed level of agreement.

Overall, the findings indicated that 54.2% of the 452 respondents who participated in the study were male and 45.4% were female (two respondents preferred not to respond to this question). All respondents who participated in the study were older than 18 years, while almost half of the respondents who completed the survey were in the 48-66 age group (48.5%). Additionally, most of the respondents were either self-employed or full-time employed (71.7%).

Subsequently, the research hypotheses were tested using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. The models were built in MPlus version 8.5. Bootstrap analysis was used to test for mediating effects. The assessment was based on 5,000 samples and a 95% level of confidence.

RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

After accounting for covariances between two items of the green helping behavior in general scale (teaching other customers and giving advice about purchasing green products), acceptable fit statistics were obtained for the measurement model (Hair et al., 2014): Chi-square (x^2) = 702.001; degrees of freedom (df) = 214; $x^2/df = 3.28$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.95; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.94; and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.071. All standardized factor loadings and composite reliability values listed in Table 1 exceed 0.7, with none of the factor loadings being insignificant ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1. Assessment of Latent Variables

Construct items	Std. factor loading	CR
AC1	0.75	0.95
AC2	0.80	
AC3	0.90	
AC4	0.86	
AC5	0.89	
AC6	0.92	
AC7	0.92	
SN1	0.86	0.92
SN2	0.93	
SN3	0.89	
PC1	0.88	0.85
PC2	0.85	
ATT1	0.87	0.90
ATT2	0.86	
ATT3	0.86	
HE1	0.89	0.93
HE2	0.95	
HE3	0.84	
HE4	0.81	

FH1	0.86	
FH2	0.92	0.94
FH3	0.90	
FH4	0.91	

Notes: All factors loaded significantly at $p < 0.001$; CR = composite reliability; AC = affective commitment toward fellow customer; SN = subjective norm; PC = perceived behavioral control; ATT = green attitude; HE = green helping behavior in general; FH = further green helping behavior intentions.

Subsequently, reliability and convergent validity are evident as all average variance extracted values (AVE) are also over 0.5 (see Table 2). Moreover, for each pair of latent variables, the shared variance between them never exceeded the AVE values for the respective variables. Hence, the measurement model did not present any discriminant validity problems (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 2. Latent Factor Correlation Matrix with Average Variance Extracted on the Diagonal

Latent variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. AC	**(0.75)**					
2. SN	0.29	**(0.80)**				
3. PC	0.33	0.58	**(0.74)**			
4. ATT	0.35	0.45	0.54	**(0.74)**		
5. HE	0.38	0.57	0.69	0.44	**(0.77)**	
6. FH	0.57	0.39	0.52	0.43	0.57	**(0.81)**

Notes: All correlations are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$; AC = affective commitment toward fellow customer; SN = subjective norm; PC = perceived behavioral control; ATT = green attitude; HE = green helping behavior in general; FH = further green helping behavior intentions.

Structural Model Results and Mediation

Acceptable fit indices were obtained for the structural model: $\chi^2 = 714.083$; df = 215; $\chi^2/df = 3.32$; CFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.94; and RMSEA = 0.072. As evident in Table 3, all standardized regression weights are positive, except for the relationship that was tested in H3b, which produced the lowest standardized regression weight (-0.01) and was also not significant. The relationship tested in H4a produced the highest standardized regression weight (0.52), which was also significant. Other positive and significant relationships tested in the model include H1, H2, and H3a, which produced regression weights varying between 0.25 and 0.38. Overall, only H3b, H4b, and H5 were not supported in the model.

Regarding the mediation results, first, the indirect effect of subjective norm on further green helping behavior intention through green helping behavior in general is significant (0.07; $p < 0.05$; CI [0.026, 0.129]). Second, the indirect effect of perceived behavioral control on further green helping behavior intention through green helping behavior in general is significant (0.149; $p < 0.05$; CI [0.071, 0.240]). Third, the indirect effect of green attitude on further green helping behavior intention through green helping behavior in general is not significant (0.015;

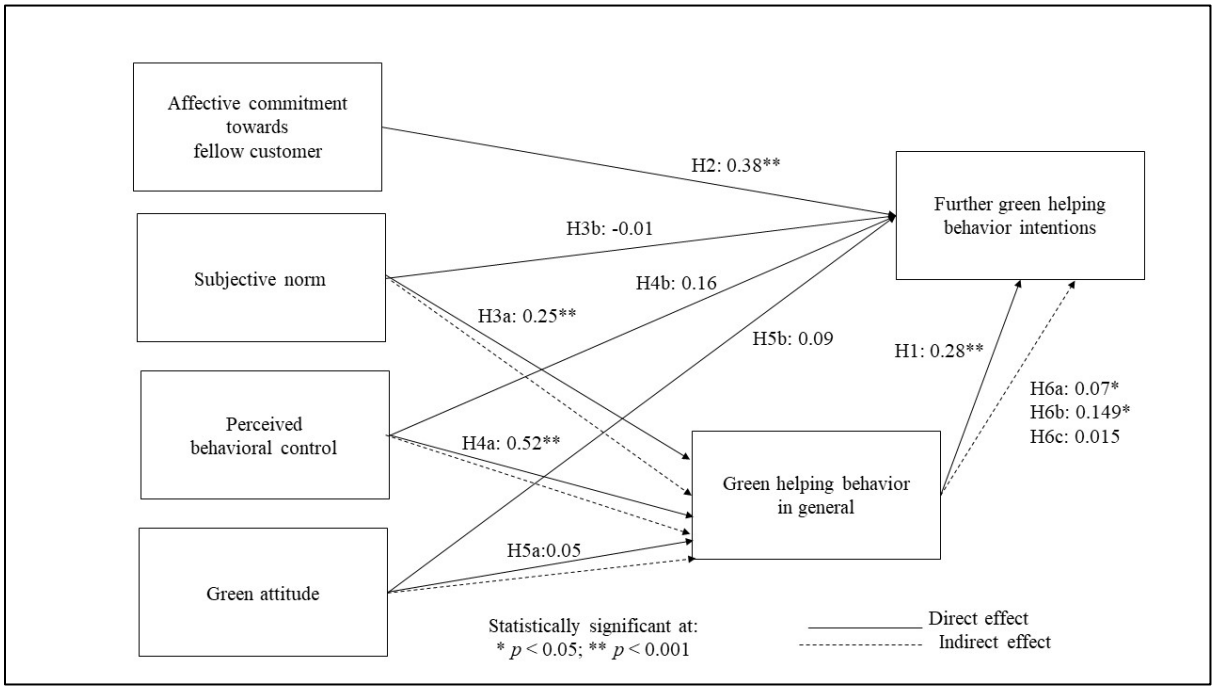
$p > 0.05$; CI [-0.014, 0.042]). Subsequently, H6a and H6b were supported, but H6c was not. The research findings are summarized in Figure 2.

Table 3. Structural Model Results

Structural path	Std. coefficient	S.E.	*p*-value	Result
H1: HE→FH	0.28	0.07	0.001**	Supported
H2: AC→FH	0.38	0.05	0.001**	Supported
H3a: SN→HE	0.25	0.06	0.001**	Supported
H3b: SN→FH	-0.01	0.06	0.892	Not supported
H4a: PC→HE	0.52	0.06	0.001**	Supported
H4b: PC→FH	0.16	0.08	0.054	Not supported
H5a: ATT→HE	0.05	0.05	0.276	Not supported
H5b: ATT→FH	0.09	0.06	0.147	Not supported

Notes: **Significant at $p < 0.001$; S.E. = standard error; AC = affective commitment toward fellow customer; SN = subjective norm; PC = perceived behavioral control; ATT = green attitude; HE = green helping behavior in general; FH = further green helping behavior intentions.

Figure 2. Structural Model



THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

On the basis of previous research (Xu and Lin, 2018, p. 245), cognitive, behavioral, and emotional factors were expected to play a significant role in shaping the behavioral intentions of customers concerning further green helping behaviors directed toward other customers who

previously ignored their advice about green purchasing. However, while support was found for some hypotheses, a few surprising results were obtained.

Specifically, with respect to H1, the findings support previous research suggesting that people tend to repeat past behaviors (Lianto, 2015, p. 121; Xu and Lin, 2018, p. 248), specifically in the context of green consumer behavior (Lalot et al., 2019, p. 80). A moderate direct effect was produced (H1: $\beta = 0.28$; $p < 0.001$). The findings are further significant, as they highlight that further green helping intentions are likely when customers have accepted the role of being a helper of green purchasing and generally engage in these types of behaviors. Customers who tend to help other customers with green purchasing in general are not likely to give up when other customers ignore their advice.

Furthermore, regarding H2, the findings support not only previous research denoting positive relationships between affective commitment and customer citizenship behaviors (Choi and Lotz, 2018, pp. 620, 628), but also provide novel insight into the extent to which emotional attachment toward a fellow customer may contribute to further helping behavior intentions. A relatively large direct effect was obtained for the relationship between affective commitment toward fellow customers and further green helping behavior intentions (H2: $\beta = 0.38$; $p < 0.001$). Hence, there is a noticeable likelihood that customer helpers affectively committed toward fellow customers who previously ignored their advice about green purchasing may intend to help these fellow customers with green purchasing further as it would allow them to reinforce bonds with their fellow customers (Curth et al., 2014, p. 149).

A further interesting observation is that customer helpers' emotional attachments toward fellow customers appear to play a larger role in influencing further green helping behavioral intentions than past green helping behaviors. Subsequently, the findings also challenge previous research denoting that past behavior is perceived as the greatest forecaster of future endeavors (Lianto, 2015, p. 121). A plausible reason for this scenario is that the fellow customer who was previously helped but ignored advice about green purchasing is likely a friend or a family member to whom the customer helper is committed and wants to protect and strengthen bonds with.

Furthermore, based on the results presented in Table 3, it seems likely that customer helpers may not be directly motivated to continue helping other customers with green purchasing purely because people who are important to them think that they should (subjective norm) or because they are confident in their ability to impart important knowledge to others concerning green purchasing and/or believe they possess the expertise to do so (perceived behavioral control) (H3b and H4b). However, as evidenced by H6a and H6b, when the customer helper also engages in green helping behavior in general, it may serve as a mechanism to connect perceptions of subjective norm and perceived behavioral control with further green helping behavior intentions. Thus, customer helpers experiencing pressure from other people to provide help with green purchasing and believing they have the ability to help may be more willing to persevere and intend to help customers who previously ignored their green purchasing advice when they also engage in green helping behavior in general. Moreover, the stronger indirect effect obtained for H6b, compared to H6a, could be attributed to the direct effect for H4a ($\beta = 0.52$; $p < 0.001$),

which was much larger than the direct effect of H3a ($\beta = 0.25$; $p < 0.001$). Thus, the findings provide further evidence that when customer helpers are confident about their ability to impart knowledge to others with respect to green purchasing, the likelihood is stronger (compared to subjective norm) that they may engage in green helping behaviors in general.

A further interesting observation is that green attitude seems to play no significant role in influencing green helping behavior in general or furthering green helping behavior intentions (H5a and H5b). These findings contradict previous research that noted positive relationships between attitudes and pro-environmental behavioral intentions as well as ecologically conscious consumer behaviors (Askadilla and Krisjanti, 2017, p. 11; Taufique and Vaithianathan, 2018, p. 51). A possible explanation for this occurrence is that the attitude construct measured the customer helpers' perceptions about purchasing green products, while all other antecedents that were assessed in the model concentrated more on customer helpers' perceptions, feelings, and behaviors concerning other customers. Therefore, the findings are further meaningful as they suggest that a mere internal reflection on the wisdom of purchasing green products would not serve as a viable motivator for stimulating green helping behaviors.

Overall, the findings shed new light on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and its relevance in the context of this study. Concerning further green helping behavioral intentions, it seems that attitude may not be a relevant factor motivating these behaviors. Instead, two novel factors included in the model may have a greater influence. Affective commitment toward fellow customer helpers may have the largest impact on further green helping behavior intentions, followed by green helping behavior in general. Cognitive factors, such as subjective norm and perceived behavioral control, may also have an influencing effect, but only indirectly through perceptions of green helping behaviors in general.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

From a managerial perspective, the identified model as delineated in Figure 2 provides further evidence that businesses could partner with customer supporters of green products to persuade more reluctant customers to purchase green products. A further advantage is that empirical evidence is provided that even though the customer helpers' advice may not initially have been followed, there is a possibility that the customer helper will persevere and continue assisting the other customer with respect to green purchasing.

Consequently, in targeting customer supporters of green products, businesses may be doing well by focusing on customers who already engage in green helping behavior in general. These types of customer helpers are likely to further help other customers who previously ignored their advice about green purchasing. They may also respond positively with continued helping if they experience pressure from others to provide help with green purchasing or feel confident in their ability to provide help with green purchasing.

Marketing interventions, such as media campaigns, could aid in building relationships with these customers who should be motivated to persevere in their endeavors to help other customers with green purchasing. Training initiatives, such as website information pieces, magazine editorials,

detailed product labels, and radio interviews, could further aid in ensuring these customers are more confident in their knowledge and expertise to help other customers with green purchasing.

In addition, media campaigns could remind customer helpers of their commitment to other customers (likely their friends and family members) and the important role they could and should play in further helping these customers become more responsible shoppers of green products. The benefits that may be gained from these behaviors could include not only strengthened bonds between customers, but also greater environmental sustainability and preservation of the earth's natural resources.

Hence, to conclude, the results emanating from this study indicate that significant relationships within the set of variables are both present and meaningful. In essence, marketers have an opportunity to capitalize on the relationships among members of consumer reference groups. Consumers who provide their own insight about green consumption tend to be viewed more favorably than organizations that engage in promotional efforts featuring identical information. This phenomenon is particularly evident within the realm of influencers on social media such as YouTube and TikTok. Furthermore, the cost associated with the dissemination of this information is nominal, perhaps even free. Marketers who can identify consumers with a propensity to engage in green helping behavior have an opportunity to appeal to an important target market. The synergy derived from a combination of the marketers' Integrated Marketing Communication plans that emphasize green behavior in conjunction with the more informal communication from – and with – the green consumer helper can help establish a sustainable competitive advantage that could impact brand switching behavior, while potentially overcoming price resistance in those cases where the price of a green product is somewhat higher than the price of a brown alternative. As a consequence, it can also result in a higher degree of brand loyalty that produces three winners: the individual consumer, the green marketer, and the global environment.

Today's emphasis on sustainability is not going to fade away. It will be a long-term focus involving a multitude of consumers, marketers, and government entities across the globe. If marketers can persuade consumers to do some of their legwork by reaching out to nonadopters of a green philosophy, then they can benefit accordingly. As already stated, the result is that there are multiple winners in this relationship.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study was conducted on a small scale in South Africa, a developing country. It was also based on data collection using an Internet-based protocol. Given the lack of easy access to the Internet among many consumers in the country, there is concern as to the representativeness of the resultant sample. Despite this reservation, it is believed that the sample is a solid microcosm of the sector of the consumer market that is most active within the retail environment. Further research is required to test the viability of the model in more developed countries and to assess the extent to which the same set of factors may contribute to further green helping behavior intentions in these countries. Longitudinal analysis is required to examine the degree to which customer helpers may persevere over the long term if the other customer continues to ignore

their advice. More research is needed to draw comparisons between further helping behavior intentions if the fellow customer who was previously helped is a friend or a stranger. Investigations are required into the type and quality of help provided by customer helpers that may lead to other customers ignoring their advice about green purchasing. Customers who previously ignored customer helpers' advice about green purchasing should also be surveyed to obtain a better understanding of their behaviors. Finally, the identified model could be extended by examining the relevance of other emotions in the model, such as customer helpers' feelings of sympathy or anger toward the other customer who did not listen to their advice about green purchasing.

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