

## The Influence of Cultural Values and Environmental Attitudes on Green Consumer Behaviour

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This research investigates the effect of Sri Lankan consumers' cultural values and environmental attitudes on green consumer behaviour. Green consumer behaviour varies in different cultures. In this context, people's cultural values help to form environmental beliefs/attitudes predict preferences for environmentally friendly behaviour. Therefore, it is important to understand culturally determined values related to the environmental behaviour. A survey approach was adopted and a random sample of 250 consumers who made purchasing decisions was taken for data collection. Self was used to collect the data and regression analysis was employed to test hypotheses. The survey instrument was to be both reliable and valid. The results revealed that both collectivism and long-term orientation were good predictors for formation of environmental attitudes in Sri Lanka. Cultural values are highly correlated with environmental attitudes. However, environmental attitudes have shown negative significant impact on green consumer behaviour intention. Especially, Sri Lankan consumers who have less awareness or interest in environmental friendly actions have shown negative significant relationship. The results will provide government policy makers to develop environmental education and awareness programs for Sri Lankan people to encourage green actions. These findings could also help provide business planners with valuable insights on consumer behaviour. Further, study fundamental differences between developed nation's cultural values (e.g., guilt culture) in the West and developing nation's cultural values (e.g., shame culture) in Asian region to green behaviour intention.

**Keywords:** collectivism, long-term orientation, environmental, green consumer behaviour

In the last several decades, the environment has become an increasingly noticeable concern for socially responsible behaviour, and issues in the environmental domain have been gaining the attention of researches in marketing. Contemporary marketing literature provides the term "*societal marketing concept*" to cover social and environmental responsibilities (Kotler, 1985) and therefore environment is one of the social responsible marketing issues has become key role to minimize natural environmental damage. Social concerned about the environmental aspect of marketing has viewed and implemented in different ways. Marketing researchers have found a new line of research that has been given different terminologies such as *ecological marketing* (Fisk, 1974), *environmental marketing* (Peattie,

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1995), *Green Marketing* (Ottman, 1993; Carlson, Grove, & Kangun, 1993; Polonsky, 1994; D'Souza, 2004; D'Souza, Taghian, & Lamb, 2006; D'Souza, Taghian, & Khosla, 2007), and *sustainable marketing* (Follows & Jobber, 2000; Charter, Peattie, Ottman, & Polonsky, 2006). These terminologies are normally considered in the similar field of study: the analysis of how marketing activities influence on the environment and how environment variables can be incorporated into the various decisions of marketing. The change from ecology to "green" was accompanied by a change in focus from environmentalism to sustainability. Thus, "green" is not only aiming to reduce environmental damage by tapping into consumer demand but also seeking consumption to create a sustainable development.

Going green is a major contributor to the triple bottom line of business: i.e., people, profit and planet. However, going green requires a paradigm shift in green consumer behaviour (Polonsky, 1994) and researches use different typologies to mention this as pro-environmental behaviour, environmental consciousness, environmental significant behaviour in line with consumers' environmental values, beliefs and attitudes. The nature of the green behaviour related motivational domains are quite different from the general consumer behaviour. For example, general consumer behavior most probably looks at personal benefits and costs while *green consumer behavior* is unlikely to deliver instant personal benefits or pleasure, but rather a future oriented outcomes (e.g., a cleaner environment) that often benefits society as a whole (McCarthy & Shrum, 2001). In this context, consumer's value orientations (e.g., person's cultural values, ethical, and political values) have found significant relationship to human behavior. Research has demonstrated relationships between personal values, attitudes, and purchase of health foods (Homer & Kahle, 1988).

However, value orientations and green consumer behavior (e.g., the demand of the environmental friendly products) are still unstable and the market conditions and standards differ from culture to culture. Schiffman & Kanuk (1994) have found that cultural values are often seen as important forces shaping individuals' view about the world. It is shared by all members of a social group and shape one's attitudes and behaviour. According to the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) value orientations have been described as fundamental dimensions upon which difference culture may vary and these basic cultural differences can apply a profound influence on the way in which the members of the culture think and act. These dimensions reflects whether the extent to which a culture values the individual over the collectivism, whether the culture is past or future oriented, and whether the culture is masculine or feminine in its orientation.

One of the preliminary objectives of this research is going to identify cultural characteristics that shape environmental values and consumer behaviour in Sri Lanka. Consumer needs to be fulfilled through consumption of particular products or brands, however, vary considerably with the socio-cultural differences among consumer markets. According to Yau (1994), consumers' product choice and preference for particular product or brand are generally affected by very complex social influences. Consumers in different countries have distinctive perceptions of products (Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994; Anderson, 1997) and attitudes towards products differ significantly from country to country (e.g., Papadopoulos et al., 1990). Thus, consumers' values, which reflect social influences and environment should affect needs to be fulfilled through purchase and consumption decisions, and therefore consumption behaviour (Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994). Values are therefore at the heart of the culture of any country or organisation.

Researchers have stressed the need for studies in the context of developing countries because of the fact that cultural values orientations in developing countries are different from those of developed countries (Diekmann & Franzen, 1999). However, Wanninayaka and Randiwela (2008) revealed that the green products have substantial awareness among Sri Lankan consumers and they are willing to pay something more for green products. Sri Lanka is a developing country in the South Asia with 20 million people. Sri Lanka today is South Asia's most opened economy and therefore known as 'the Gate Way to South Asia' by many investors. Therefore, this study will provide environmentalists, government authorities and marketing planners/strategists with valuable insights on green consumer behaviour with applicability to the context of Sri Lanka in order to develop effective green strategies.

### **Sri Lanka sees "Green"**

Today, people, all over the world believe that environmental issues are one of the pressing problems facing every society. The practice of green marketing and the force of 'going green' are now extending to the Asian region where environmental threats are disturbing governments and citizens. Sri Lanka's, environment quality lags far behind when compared to the developed countries (e.g., high level of pollution, lack of proper methods to minimize pollution & recycling, less amount of eco-friendly products). Research evidence suggested that citizens in Asian societies are increasingly becoming conscious of alarming environmental problems and government policies and business strategies in many Asian countries are being reshaped

to give more consideration to long-term sustainable developments including environmental protection (Johri & Sahasakmontri, 1998).

From the early 1970s, the “green” concept has been rising in the West, government, policy makers and companies in Sri Lanka are now at the stage of green awakening, e.g., Sri Lankan environmental forum on ‘greening the economy’ (Central Environmental Authority, 2011), environmental education programs for every levels of the country (e.g., National Cleaner Products Centre [NCPC] capacity building training program on cleaner production for university academics, NCPC–Sri Lanka, 2006, 2009, & 2011). Furthermore, on observations and some speeches entail that recently, the government and some citizens of Sri Lanka have become conscious to the seriousness of the environmental issues and health problems. Sri Lanka aspires to motivate people to choose healthy/organic food products, reduce pollution through new regulations and environmentally safe consumption as less carbon emission and electricity & energy saving programs.

Along with some consumption tendency that has been observed recently in Sri Lanka more changes are needed in terms of the increase in consumers’ knowledge, environmental concern and positive beliefs towards eco-friendly, safe, and cleaner products that do not pollute the environment. An important task here is to undertake a research on eco-orientation because even though environmental attitudes are critical part of corporate social responsibility and ethics frameworks, researches have largely ignored eco-specific area related to consumer’s/individual’s cultural, ethical, and political values of green consumer behaviour. Especially, cultural values can be seen as fundamental characteristic that impact to the green consumption behaviour. However, in Sri Lanka, there is no research has been conducted in the area of cultural value orientations about environmental friendly behaviour.

Therefore, this study attempted to add to the current literature on cultural values and behaviour, with an effort toward understanding the relationships in the Sri Lankan context of intervening environmental attitudes. Therefore, the study problem is how Sri Lankans’ cultural values (e.g., collectivistic values, long term orientation) influence their green attitudes and behaviour.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this study presented in this paper is to examine the Sri Lankan people’s cultural value orientation and environmental concern/beliefs on green consumer behaviours.

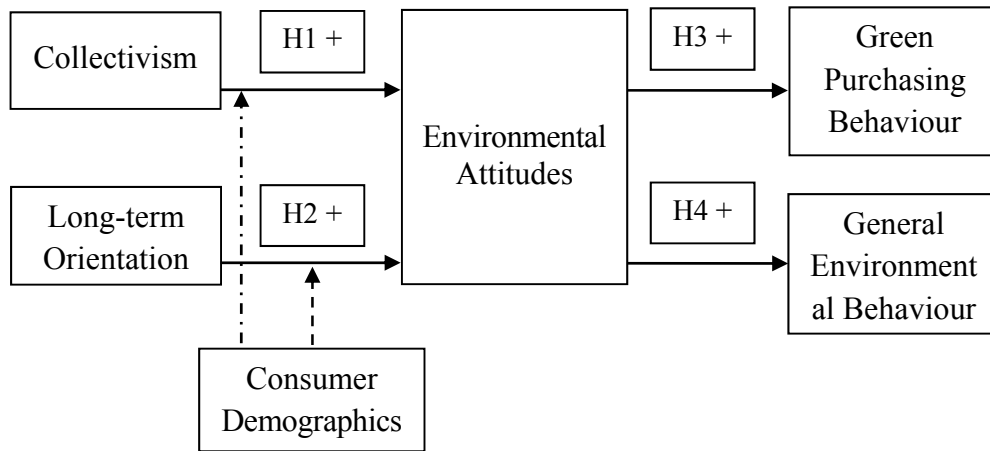
It focuses on achieving the following sub objectives in order to address the above major objective:

1. To explain the relationship between people's collectivistic values and environmental attitudes on green consumer behaviour.
2. To examine the relationship between long term orientation and environmental attitudes on green consumer behaviour.
3. To elucidate the link between consumer's environmental attitudes and green consumer behaviour.

In addition, it identifies the interactive role of consumers' demographics on the relationship among above variables related to green purchase behaviour.

### Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Based on above literature review the following conceptual model was developed depicting the hypothetical relationships existing the independent variables and dependent variable of the study. Conceptual study framework consists of two cultural motives namely, collectivism, long-term orientation, consumer's environmental attitudes, demographic characteristic of consumer and green consumer behaviour intention. Green consumer behaviour intention as dependent variable has two sub components such as green purchasing behaviour and general behaviour intention (figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Conceptual Study Model. (Source: Author developed based on literature review).

Behavioural researchers have emphasized that purchase intention is the most immediate relevant predictor of corresponding behaviour (“Theory of reasoned action” –Ajzen & Fishbein 1977; 1980). Most of the research on green consumers behaviour demonstrated that a significant positive relationship between ecological intention and behaviour (Chan & Yam, 1995). Hypotheses associated with the construct of the study model are presented in the following sections.

### **Cultural Value Orientations**

Understanding and predicting the influence of culture is central to consumer purchasing behaviour (Hofstede, 1980; Schiffman & Kanuk 1994; McCarthy & Shrum, 2001). As cultural diversity exists among nations various dimensions were proposed to describe cultural orientations such as people’s relationship to nature and the world; their relationship to other people, their primary type of activities; and their orientation in time and space (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1989). Research indicates that significant differences are reported in environmental values/attitudes between collectivist versus individualistic cultures, past-oriented versus future oriented cultures, materialistic versus post-materialist cultures and externally versus internally controlled cultures (Sarigöllü, 2009). Among the different cultural values the present study focus on collectivism and long-term orientation based values as the most common variables for any society.

### **Individualism, Collectivism and Environmental Concern**

Many researches (Kim & Choi, 2005; Sarigöllü, 2009; Leonidou, Leonidou, & Lulea, 2010) argue that Hofstade’s individualism vs. collectivism orientations have become key variables or explanatory features in a wide variety of environmental research as well. In individualistic cultures, individual goals are considered as more important than group goals and in collectivism cultures group goals are more important than individual’s goals. Triandis (1989) has cited that in collective societies, individuals are expected to participate in group activities and cooperate with the group, and individualistic societies, individuals tend to have an identity of the group.

Further, Hofstede (1980) has implied that collectivistic cultures can be seen as affiliation, admiration, and status which tend to be one of the main driving forces of consumer behaviour. As he mentioned, collectivism emphasizes interdependence, in group harmony, family security, group-oriented goals, social hierarchies, cooperation, and law of competition. According to the Kim and Choi (2005), collectivistic consumers are more

likely to develop environmentally friendly attitudes because they tend to demonstrate cooperative behaviour, help to others and give priority to the goals of group rather than their personal goals. Based on the above arguments this proposed that people who are more collectivistic are likely to be more concerned about the environmental issues than people who are individualistic. Therefore, environmental concerned significantly differ between the collectivist vs. Individualistic and the proposed specific hypothesis is as follow:

*H1: The more collectivistic the Sri Lankan consumers are, the more positively and directly they are concerned with the environment.*

### **Short-Term versus Long-Term Orientations and Environmental Concern**

In literature, one of the dimensions of culture can be classified into time space which is specifically related to environmental concerned/attitudes; e.g., history and nature connected with past-oriented verses future oriented cultural values or short term verses long term orientations (Hofstede, 1980). Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, (1961) developed a value orientation framework which is called the K & F framework to explain the uniqueness of the Chinese culture. This K & F framework classified cultural values into five dimensions such as 1) man-nature orientation, 2) man-himself orientation, 3) relational orientation, 4) past-time orientations, and 5) activity orientation (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Of these “Man-Nature” Orientation is determined the relationship between human beings and the natural environment and it is incongruent with long term orientation emphasised by new research paradigm. According to the Hofstede (1980), long-term orientation refers to the prospects perceived by an individual that a society will be in a position to overcome its problem over time. In fact, Sarigollu (2009) has emphasized that long term oriented people likely to develop values and attitudes pertaining to the protection of the natural environment. Furthermore, some recent research have shown that future oriented individuals and cultures are long-term oriented and tend to protect the natural environment (Joreiman, Van Lange, & Van Vugt, 2004). Therefore it is hypothesized that:

*H2: The more long term oriented the Sri Lankan consumers are, the more positively and directly they are concerned with the environment.*

## **Environmental Attitudes and Green Consumer Behaviour**

Ecological affect (Chan & Lau, 2000) environmental friendly beliefs and attitudes in most cases explained as environmental concerned (Sarigollu, 2009). Research indicates that different cultural contexts may have different environmental attitudes and behaviour. Homer & Kahle (1988) provide empirical support on the value-attitudes-behaviour hierarchy effect in the case of private green consumption. Environmental attitudes mean predisposition behaviour that consciously seeks to minimize the negative impact of individual's actions on the natural world. Researchers found that environmental attitudes directly influence to the green consumer behaviour (Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008).

The pro-environmental behaviour is basically people whose behaviour reflects a relatively consistent and conscious concern for the environmentally friendly purchase, use or disposal of particular products. According to the Kilbourne & Pickett, (2008) pro-environmental behaviour intention has further divided in two aspects such as green purchasing behaviour which leads to purchase green product (direct behaviour) and general environmental behaviour as minimize resources and energy consumption, reduce waste product/recycle products, avoid non- environmental friendly products and companies, respect to the environmental laws, and be an activist (indirect behaviour). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

*H3: Sri Lankan consumers' environmental attitudes positively influences the green purchasing behavior.*

*H4: Sri Lankan consumers' environmental attitudes positively influences the general green behavior.*

Based on above literature review, the conceptual model (shown in figure 1) was developed depicting the hypothesized relationships exist between the independent variables and the dependent variable of the study.

## **Methodology**

A survey research approach was adopted. The target population of the study is the main decision makers and end consumers. The study took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka, which provides new and fruitful ground for green marketing aspect initially characterised by educated and demanding consumers who have knowledge and are concerned about the environmental issues. The population of the study consisted of present undergraduates and



graduates passed out from a leading management faculty at state university in Sri Lanka during last 15 years. In order to make inferences of the population, it was determined that a sample of 250 consumers would be sufficient for the study as it satisfies rules of thumb proposed by Sekaran, (2007). The random sampling techniques were used in selecting the respondents using the list of registered undergraduates of the university.

The data was collected primarily by using a self-administered questionnaire to measure the constructs related to cultural values (such as collectivism and long term orientation) and environmental concern/attitudes toward green consumer behaviour. A structured questionnaire mainly consisting of four parts; namely collectivism and long-term orientation of cultural values as antecedent factors, environmental attitudes, green consumer behavior and demographic profiles. The questions in the questionnaire were measured on 5-point Likert scales (Strongly Agree –Strongly Disagree) was used to measure the dimensions. Five statements assessed collectivism (e.g., I respect the majorities wish, try to maintain group harmony), and also five statements measured long term orientation (e.g., respect for Sri Lankan traditions, people, animal, and nature). Environmental concern measured the attitudes toward environmental issues and environmental responsibilities, e.g., I am worried about the increasing pollution of the country, I feel moral obligation to relieve the environmental problems). Environmental behavior measured based on intention towards purchasing green products (e.g., willing to purchase environmental friendly goods) and general behavior such as saving electricity, energy, minimize wastes, and produce compost). Before conducting the large scale questionnaire survey, a pilot study was carried out to confirm the reliability of the constructs.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to measure the reliability/internal consistency of the measurement scales, e.g., Cronbach's alpha of collectivism was 0.87, long-term orientation was 0.73, environmental attitudes were 0.79 and green consumer behavior was 0.71 and therefore construct reliability was high and well above the cut-off point of 0.70 (If the value is  $\geq 0.7$ , the scales were sufficiently reliable Nunnally, 1967). The face validity of the scales was assured through experts' reviews and literature survey. In order to test the dimensionality of the measurement constructs, an exploratory factor analysis was performed by following the procedure recommended by Churchill (1979). A few in-depth- interviews with a few customers are also carried out to improve understanding of the quantitative findings of the study.

In order to measure the independent variables in the hypothesis 1 and 2, cultural values of consumers were operationalized in terms of the individualistic vs. Collectivistic and short-term orientations vs. long-term orientations. Collectivism was measured by adopting the McCarthy and Shrum, 2001 & long-term orientation measured by adopting from Hofstede, 1980. The measures for the environmental concern/attitudes was adapted by Kilbourne and Pickett (2008) and the same source was also used to measure the green consumer behaviour but this split into purchasing behaviour (four items), and general environmental behaviour (four items).

Data analysis strategy in the study consists of descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis and regression. The hypotheses were tested using linear regression analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 was used for data analysis.

### Findings and Discussion

According to the Pearson correlation analysis (shown in the table 1), it was evident that the cultural values (both collectivism & long term orientation) have strong positive correlations with environmental concern/attitudes. Thus, consumer's both collective efforts and long-term orientation influence to formation of environmental attitudes in Sri Lankan consumers. However, there is no correlation between environmental concern/attitudes and green consumer behaviour. Pro-environmental attitudes were not significantly associated with either green purchase behaviour or general environmental behaviour.

Table 1

#### *Results of Pearson Correlation Coefficient*

Variable	Collectivism	Long term orientation	Environmental attitudes	Green purchase behaviour	General environmental behaviour
Collectivism	1.00	0.54	0.84	-	-
Long term orientation	0.54*	1.00	0.76	-	-
Environmental attitudes	0.76*	0.84*	1.00	0.001*	0.000*

Note. \* $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

In testing the hypothesized relationships depicted in the conceptual model, the linear regression analysis revealed the following results as shown in the table 2 and table 3.

Table 2

*Results of Cultural Values on Environmental Concern/Attitudes*

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable Environmental attitudes	
	$\beta$	Adjusted $R^2$
Collectivism	0.645*	0.412
Long-term orientation	0.431*	0.186

Note. \* $p < .05$ .

According to this analysis, hypothesis-1 is accepted and there is significant evidence to conclude that the collectivist cultural values are positively influence the environmental attitudes in Sri Lankan consumers. Collectivism has strong positive influence for environmental concern, e.g., when collective values increase by one unit, environmental concern will increase by 0.6345 unit values. Independent variable (collectivism) predicts 41.2% (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.412$ ) of the total variance of the dependent variable (environmental concern). Therefore, the collectivism is a more important independent/predictor variables that influence the level of environmental concern. Hypothesis-2 is also accepted and there is significant evidence that the consumer's long-term orientation is positively influence environmental concern/attitudes in Sri Lanka and this impact seems to be not stronger than collectivism. Long-term orientation can be predicted 18.6% of the total variance of the environmental concern or attitudes (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.186$ ).

Table 3

*Results of Environmental Attitudes and Green Consumer Behaviour*

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	$\beta$	Adjusted $R^2$
Environmental attitudes	Green Purchasing behaviour	- 0.454**	0.206
Environmental attitudes	General environmental behaviour	- 0.541*	0.112

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Although both Hypothesis-3 and 4 are rejected, there is negative significant evidence that environmental attitudes affect negatively to both

green purchasing behaviour and general environmental behaviour in Sri Lanka. The findings are consistent with the results of environmental study by Diekmann & Franzen (1999). They have mentioned that the environmental issues in developing countries are more complicated and the people from poorer countries are asked to rank the most pressing problems to them, environmental issues are indeed rank in lower. In the model predicting green purchasing behaviour, adjusted  $R^2$  value (0.206) accounts for the fact that environmental concerns explain a relatively low level of variance of the change in green purchasing behaviour. Similarly, low  $R^2$  value (0.112) of the model predicting general environmental behaviour explain that environmental concern accounts for less variance in predicting general environmental behaviour of Sri Lankan consumers. It draws insights that there are other significant environmentally based cultural predictors that strongly explain the variance of both green purchasing behaviour as well as general environmental behaviour in Sri Lankan context.

### **Influences of Consumer Demographics on the Relationship between Environmental Attitudes and Green Behaviour**

Table 4

#### *ANOVA Test Results for Interaction Effect*

Interaction between Demographics and Environmental Attitudes	Standardized Beta Coefficients
Env. Con X Inlow	0.064
Env. Con X Inhigh	0.045
Env. Con X InMidium	0.047
Env. Con X Occu 1	-0.060
Env. Con X Occu 2	0.056
Env. Con X Occu 3	0.022
Env. Con X Occu 4	0.770
Env. Con X Married	0.110
Env. Con X Unmarried	1.013*
Env. Con X age(18-25)	1.122*
Env. Con X_age(25-35)	0.045
Env. Con X_age(above 35)	0.047

Note. \*p < .05.

In analyzing the impact of consumers' demographic factors (shown in table 4) on the relationship between environmental attitudes and green

consumer behaviour, it is found that differences in income, and occupation of the Sri Lankan consumers do not have a significant influence on relationship between pro-environmental attitudes and green behavioural intention in Sri Lanka. However, differences in marital status have a significant influence on the relationship between pro-environmental attitudes and green purchase intention. E.g., for unmarried consumers (single), there is a strong positive relationship between ethical and political values and pro-environmental attitudes than married consumers in Sri Lanka. In addition to this, it is also revealed that age differences affect the relationship between consumers' ethical and political values and green consumer behaviour intention. E.g., for 18-25 age group of consumers have a strong positive relationship between ethical and political values and pro-environmental attitudes in Sri Lanka than other age categories of consumers.

### **Conclusion and Further Research**

The results of the data analysis revealed that both collectivism and long-term orientation are found to be good predictors for formation of environmental attitudes in Sri Lanka. Both cultural values are highly correlated with environmental attitudes. However, environmental attitudes have shown negative significant impact on green consumer behaviour intention. Especially, Sri Lankan consumers who have less awareness or interest in environmental friendly actions have shown negative significant relationship. In addition, there need to be future studies to explore the more strong cultural value predictors of green oriented behaviour in the Sri Lankan context since the traditional western based environmental value predictors do not seem to be powerful enough to stand for Sri Lankan consumer dynamics.

That means an individual's different motives and attitudes about the environment do not necessarily act green consumer behaviour in general. There are some other factors influences between environmental values and behaviour related action. This may implies that the Sri Lankan consumers, being in a developing country, might have a low attention about the environment. Diekmann & Franzen (1999) have mentioned that the environmental issues in developing countries are more complicated. They showed that when people from poorer countries are asked to rank the most pressing problems to them, environmental issues are indeed rank in lower. Therefore, future studies should explore how antecedents and outcomes of consumers' environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviour affect in emerging economies like Sri Lanka. It is also possible to empirically investigate all the internal (e.g., personality traits & value systems, Stern 2000; Leonidou et al., 2010) and external factors (e.g., social, cultural,

economical (Leonidou et al., 2010) affecting green consumer behaviour intention in Sri Lankan context in future research.

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