CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

6.1 Chapter Overview
6.2 Discussion
6.3 Theoretical Contribution of the Study
6.4 Implications for Managers
6.5 Future Research Directions
6.6 Summary of the Chapter
6.1 Chapter Overview

The chapter starts with a detailed discussion on findings of the present study. This is followed by a discussion on theoretical contribution of the study. Next, the implications for managers and policy makers have been discussed. The future research directions have also been outlined. In the end, a brief summary of the chapter has been provided.

6.2 Discussion

The findings of the present study have been categorized into two sections. In the first section, findings related to final study model are discussed. In the second section, findings related to demographics are presented.

6.2.1 Final Study Model

The acceptable values for model fit indices were obtained for both measurement and structural model. All the hypothesized linkages, except linkage between religiosity and EC and also between PCE and WTP, were supported in the present study. The final model has been illustrated in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Final Study Model

(Source: Prepared by the researcher)
It is clear from Figure 6.1 that there is a positive linkage between $ATGP$ and $WTP$. This suggests that if consumers are positive towards green products, they are more likely to shelve out extra for the purchase of these products. This finding was on the expected lines as there are a significant number of previous researchers supporting the notion that positive green attitudes can result in intention of consumers to purchase green products (Roberts, 1996; McCarty and Shrum, 1994; Roberts and Bacon, 1997; Meneses and Palacio, 2006; Cheah & Phau, 2011). This way, the present study has also supported the submission of Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and Ajzen (1985) that positive attitude toward a behaviour results in intention to perform that behaviour.

Similarly, the present study has also observed the positive linkage between $EC$ and $ATGP$ i.e. if consumers’ concern for environment is high than they are expected to be positively oriented for the purchase of eco-friendly products. This is also in line with the findings of several researchers that heightened concern for the environment makes consumers more responsive to the green offerings (Bamberg, 2003; Kilbourne and Picket, 2008; Awad, 2011; Tang et al., 2014). In this manner, the present study has reinforced the opinion that as the consumers’ sensitivity towards prevailing environmental issues increases, they become more favourable inclined towards products that have eco-friendly attributes.

The study findings also indicate that $collectivism$ and $EL$ are the antecedents of $EC$. This corroborates the findings of the previous studies (Chan, 2001; Leonidou et al., 2010; Cheah & Phau, 2011, Cho et al., 2013; Wang, 2014). In fact, the present study has recognized that $collectivism$ is comparatively more important predictor of $ATGP$ as it influences $ATGP$ directly as well as indirectly through $EC$ (Figure 6.1). It seems that the desire to share limited resources with others and emphasis on the welfare of the society increases the concern of collectivist consumers for environment and inculcates in them the desire to involve in environmental conservation campaigns. This is reflected in their positive $ATGP$. Previous researchers such as Chan (2001), Cheah and Phau (2011), Cho et al. (2013) and Wang (2014) have also indicated that consumers high on $collectivism$ are more involved in green activities. Thus, the above discussion has maintained that $collectivism$ has a crucial role to play in harnessing concerns for the environment and thereby, developing a positive attitude towards green products.
Likewise, the study finding that EL positively affects EC is in line with the findings of the previous studies that consumers’ knowledge of the environmental issues make them more concerned about the environment (Laroche et al., 2001; Fraj & Martinez, 2006; Rios et al., 2006; Cheah & Phau, 2011; Nath et al., 2013; Kirmani & Khan, 2016a,b). It seems that the knowledge of the existing state of environment and of impact of ensuing environmental threats on the present and future generations results in increasing the consumers’ sensitivity to the environmental issues.

Thus, on the basis of findings of this study, it can be safely concluded that collectivism and EL increase the consumers’ concern for the environment and enhanced concern for environment results in positive ATGP. The positive ATGP further results in WTP in the context of the purchase of green products. Collectivism has emerged as an important variable because it influences ATGP directly as well as indirectly through EC.

Also, there were two insignificant linkages. First, religiosity of consumers was not found to influence their EC. This appears to contradict the observations of previous researchers in the area as also the religious teachings of all the major religions in the world (Chen & Chai, 2009; Rice, 2006; Hassan, 2014). A plausible explanation for such finding may be that the younger age profile of the respondents for whom influence of religion may be as of now limited to spiritual aspects and they may be more objective and practical in their materialistic decision-making (Vitell et al., 1991; Fullerton et al., 1996; Rawwas & Singhapakdi, 1998; Boyatzis & McConnel, 2006; Stoppa & Lefkowitz, 2010).

Secondly, the linkage between PCE and WTP was also not significant. This is in contradiction to the findings of a significant number of previous studies that indicated a positive linkage between consumers’ effectiveness beliefs and green purchase intentions (Kim and Choi, 2005; Awad, 2011; Tan and Lau, 2011; Akehurst et al, 2012; Nath et al., 2013).

6.2.2 Consumer Demographics

a. Gender

The study findings indicate that female consumers are, comparatively, more eco-literate and also, they more willing to pay a premium for the purchase of green
products. These findings have been backed by submissions in previous studies that female consumers are greener and are more willing to spend extra for procuring green products (Laroche et al., 2001; Baynte et al., 2010; Smith, 2010; Erdogan et al., 2012; Smith & Brower, 2012). It seems that, if given a choice, the female consumers would outperform their male counterparts in purchasing the green products.

On the contrary, the present study did not find significant differences among the male and female consumers for the constructs EC and ATGP. This implies that male and female consumers are equally concerned about the environment and also equally motivated for consuming green products. This is in line with the findings of the recent studies that male and female consumers are on the same footing as far as the eco-friendly preferences are concerned (Akehurst et al., 2012; Mourad and Ahmad, 2012; Khare, 2014; Tilikidou and Delistavrou, 2014; Khare, 2015).

b. Age

Analysis for age indicates that the younger consumers (i.e. under 25 years of age) are more willing to pay a premium for the purchase of green products. This echoed the suggestion in some of the previous studies that younger are greener (Gan et al., 2008; Lee, 2008; Lee, 2009; Mourad and Ahmad, 2012). But the insignificant results for other constructs (i.e. EL, EC, and ATGP) overturned this suggestion and instead, indicated that environmental preferences of consumers are independent of their age. In fact, this is in line with findings of a significant number of earlier studies (Kinnear et al., 1974; Shamdasani et al. 1993; Akehurst et al., 2012; Hamid et al., 2012; Tilikidou & Delistavrou, 2013). The finding of the present study also substantiated the observation of Singh and Bansal (2012) that Indian consumers across age groups do not differ significantly in their green preferences.

c. Education

Contrary to the findings of a significant number of previous studies (Balderjahn, 1988; Rice, 2006; Gan, 2008; Banyte et al, 2010; Paco et al., 2010; Awad, 2011; Mourad and Ahmed, 2012; Nath et al., 2013), results of present study have indicated that education of consumers has no role to play in their environmental preferences. This may be attributed to the fact that respondents in present study were graduate and post-graduate students and hence, they may have already crossed the threshold of
educational qualifications required to understand the gravity of prevailing environmental problems and the importance of adjusting consumption habits in favour of the environment. This is supported by the high mean values for all four constructs i.e. EL, EC, ATGP and WTP (Table 5.8). Thus, it provides an important implication for the future researchers to generate data from a set of respondents spread through diverse educational categories and explore the differences in environmental preferences across those categories.

d. Income

As already discussed elsewhere, due to lack of economies of scale and use of cutting-edge technology, the green products are expected to be costlier and hence, it is assumed that consumers of the high-income bracket would be more positive towards the green products. But, in the line with a significant number of previous studies (Shamdasani et al, 1993; Gan et al, 2008; Supplico and Salle, 2009; Akehurst et al, 2012; Tilikidou and Delistavrou, 2014), the referred assumption has been invalidated by the findings of the present study. On the contrary, the Indian consumers across the income categories have been found to be on the same footing for all four parameters of the environmental related attitudes i.e. EL, EC, ATGP and WTP.

The discussion, thus far, has revealed that demographics of Indian consumers are not important in explaining their green preferences. Thus, the present study supports the assessments of the previous researchers that predictive power of demographic variables is generally low in comparison to knowledge, values, and attitudes in explaining greenness of the consumers (Webster, 1975; Banerjee and McKeage, 1994; Chan, 1999; Cheah and Phau, 2011). It may be safely concluded that greenness in consumers is hard to define demographically because of complexities involved in explaining eco-friendly preferences of the consumers (Ottman, 1993; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003).

6.3 Theoretical Contributions of the Study

Broadly, there are two main theoretical contributions from the present study. First, the present study has provided an integrated framework of interactions among the several variables related to consumers’ green purchase decisions in the Indian context and
thus, it is expected to enhance understanding of researchers and managers alike regarding green preferences of Indian consumers. Secondly, the present study highlights implications for the managers and researchers which will may help them in their endeavours.

More specifically, the scholarly contributions of the present study are listed below:

1. The study contributes to enhanced understanding of linkages among constructs such as religiosity, collectivism, IPI, EL, EC, PCE, ATGP and WTP.

2. This study has also refined and re-validated scales to measure the studied constructs. These refined scales can be used by future researchers to explore green purchase decisions in the Indian context.

3. The present study also contributes to the improved understanding of the role of consumer demographics (i.e. gender, age, education and income) in determining their environmental attributes (i.e. EL, EC, ATGP, and WTP)

4. The present study will help marketers to design better strategies for the promotion of green products. Better marketing strategies will promote environmentally responsible consumption and consequently, will have a positive influence on the environment.

Thus, this study is an innovative synthesis of both existing and new elements that can support future research in understanding the real attitude of Indian consumers towards green products.

6.4 Implications for Managers

The present study has an applied bias and findings may have important implications from the point of view of dovetailing of the market expansion strategy. The consumers, in general, have shown a willingness to pay a premium to purchase green products. Hence, the time is ripe for firms to grab the opportunity as also respond to the environmental challenge by offering eco-friendly products. Specific marketing strategies have been discussed in detail in the subsequent sections.
6.4.1 Collectivism and ATGP Linkage

The study findings have indicated that the most important predictor of green purchase attitude of Indian consumers is *collectivism* due to its ability to influence consumers’ ATGP directly as well as indirectly through *EC*. Some researchers (Sinha and Tripathi, 1994; Ghosh, 2012; Chanda and Deb, 2013), who have previously explored *collectivism* in the Indian context have also noted that *collectivism* is an important construct for the Indian consumers. The marketers in India need to acknowledge that collectivist values are more acceptable to Indians and they find it more convenient to realize their goals through collectivistic means (Ghosh, 2012; Chanda and Deb, 2013). Thus, it can be surmised that *collectivism* values of consumers can be considered as of focal interest for the marketing of green products in India. Therefore, the marketers need to manage collectivist values of Indian consumers in order to effectively promote green products, especially in the initial stages of the launch of the product so as to break early the contrary decision-making patterns.

For this purpose, marketers need to have a proper understanding of the attributes of collectivist people. The previous studies on *collectivism* suggest that collectivists are cooperative, willing to help others, emphasize group goals over personal ones and most importantly, believe in societal welfare (Follows and Jobber 2000; Kim and Choi 2005; Kim 2006). In fact, they are concerned about the impact of their action on the society. These are some attributes of collectivists which can prove useful in the promotion of green products around the globe, particularly in India, where society is still bound by compassions of love and togetherness.

Thus, marketers of green products should stress in their promotional messages on societal welfare, security and warm relations as virtues of green consumption. The green marketers need to convince the consumers that their eco-friendly consumption will help in improving the environmental conditions of the society they are living in. In fact, the idea of welfare of society will not only encourage eco-friendly consumption but will also prove profitable to the green marketers.

6.4.2 EL and EC Linkage

The findings of the present study also indicate that *EL* is an important antecedent of consumer concerns for the environment. Therefore, the green marketers in India
should endeavor to spread general awareness about the existing environmental problems among the consumers and should also try to explain environmental benefits their product is likely to offer. In this regard, the previous researchers such as D’Souza et al. (2006) and Cheah and Phau (2011) have supported the use of environmental symbols on product labels in order to enhance general environmental awareness of consumers. More specifically, the marketers should aggressively promote eco-friendly features of their products and in fact, they need to explicitly mention how their product is better than its ‘conventional’ counterpart as far as the specific environmental problem is concerned.

Moreover, Hassan (2014) has suggested that people have a desire to live green but they lack the practical knowledge of sustainable lifestyle. This problem is more pertinent for a country like India where general literacy level is low (Census, 2011). Thus, the consumers are needed to be informed and educated about the art of sustainable living. In this regard, Khan et al. (2013) have suggested that Indian consumers are needed to be educated about the environment so as to bring about a change in their level of awareness and attitude. For this purpose, the marketers can arrange random seminars and workshops to provide practical insights to the consumers about the existing environmental challenges and also to train them for sustainable living. A positive fallout of such a strategy would be that environmentally aware consumers are likely to share and spread knowledge about environmental sustainability in their peer groups (Lee, 2008; Lee, 2009; Khare, 2014).

### 6.4.3 EC and ATGP Linkage

The study finding indicating the positive linkage between EC and ATGP which has important implication for marketers. *First*, the marketers need to realize that concerns for environment are preceded by awareness and knowledge of environmental challenges and succeeded by the desire to live green. In this regard, Hassan (2014) has suggested that the positive linkage between EC and ATGP can be leveraged by stimulating the environment-related emotions among the consumers. For this purpose, Lee (2010) has suggested that emotional appeals, in comparison to rational appeals, are more effective in triggering consumers’ green purchasing attitude. The emotional environmental appeals can be both positive and negative. The use of images depicting damage to the environment or threats to the living creatures on earth may constitute
an effective negative emotional appeal. The positive appeals in slogans such as “Save Environment, Save Earth”, “Environment for All”, “Environment is Everything”, “Pay to Save Environment”, may be very useful in influencing consumers to purchase green products (Lee, 2008; Lee, 2009). These positive messages will spread positivity in the society about the environment and the consumers will be inclined to include environmental protection as an important factor in their purchase decisions.

6.4.4 ATGP and WTP Linkage

The study findings have highlighted that if marketers are successful in developing positive ATGP among the consumers, they will be successful in influencing consumers to shelve out extra for the purchase of green products. In this regard, ATGP can play a pivotal role for dovetailing marketing strategies in the context of green products in India.

If consumers are already positively oriented towards green products, then it would be better for marketers to focus more on effective positioning and easy availability of green products. This strategy can be named as “Aggressive Greening Strategy”. The objectives of this strategy can be twofold. First, the eco-friendly attributes and other benefits of product need to be effectively communicated to the consumers. Secondly, marketers need to ensure that the product is available in places which are easily accessible to the consumers and stock-outs need to be avoided at all cost. This is essential as it has been reported in previous studies that perceived and, at times, actual inconvenience associated with buying green products is a major hurdle and one of the prime reasons of attitude-behaviour gap (Amyx et al., 1994; Laroche et al., 2001; Cheah and Phau, 2011).

But, if the consumers do not currently hold positive ATGP, then green marketers need to focus on constructs such as collectivism, EL, and EC. In their endeavor to sell green products, the marketers should also attempt to leverage indirect means such as associating environmental conservation with the use of green products for societal well-being. The marketers can also use positive and negative emotional appeals in their promotional messages to leverage the consumers’ environmental knowledge and their concern for environmental conservation. This strategy could be termed as “Mild Greening Strategy”. This strategy may help inculcate feeling of empathy towards
environment among the target population which may eventually lead to positive ATGP.

Another dilemma that the marketers face is whether to adopt and implement these strategies simultaneously or in a stepwise manner, although at times the strategy mix may be dictated by the emerging marketing scenario. Previous studies suggest that marketing of green products in India is at nascent stage and consumers are not much involved in the green purchasing (Shrikant & Raju, 2012; Deshwal, 2012; Singh & Pandey, 2012). Hence, it may be appropriate for marketers of green products to implement the strategies in a stepwise manner. Initially, they should embrace mild greening strategy directed to transform collectivist beliefs and EL into EC leading to positive ATGP. Once the positive ATGP is developed, the marketers may embrace aggressive greening strategy i.e. they need to ensure proper positioning of the product as an eco-friendly alternative and also need to ensure availability of the products at places which are easily accessible to the consumers who are willing to buy them.

6.4.5 Demographics

The largely insignificant results for consumers’ demographics indicate that the Indian consumers’ environmental preferences are similar cutting across demographic categories. Although, a slight variation has been observed for the female consumers and also for consumers under 25 years of age but that too only for EL and WTP. This has important implications for the green marketers in India. It seems that the one size fit all approach may work for marketing of green products in the Indian settings, especially if focus of marketers is only on developing positive ATGP among the consumers. But, when the focus is shifted to influencing consumers to pay a premium for purchasing green products, it would be wise for marketers to embrace gender as well as age-based segmentation. As female participants in the present study have been found to be more eco-literate and more willing to pay a premium for the purchase of green products, so they can be considered for boosting environmental culture in the Indian society. The Indian females may also play a role of opinion leaders in the promotion of eco-friendly products and in influencing their male counterparts to have favourable green purchasing attitude. Thus, the marketing campaigns targeting the Indian female consumers may trigger emotions and emphasize on their responsibility to protect the environment. Moreover, the green marketers in India also need to
ensure that their products are available in places which are easily accessible to the young consumers. For example, the products with eco-friendly attributes should be available at stores located near campuses of educational institutions. Furthermore, the young consumers should be communicated about the availability of green products in nearby stores.

In sum, it can be summarized that time is ripe for marketers and policy makers to embrace the strategies discussed above because sooner or later, a situation may arise when marketers will be competing on the basis of greenness in the product and only those products which pass the test of greenness would be able to survive and sustain in the market. Hence, marketers need to be future ready or they may be caught off guard.

### 6.5 Future Research Directions

The present study has some guidelines for the futures researchers who are interested in research in the domain of consumers’ green purchase decisions. These guidelines have been listed below:

1. The previous section was devoted to the discussion of implications for the marketers based on the findings of the present study. However, the effectiveness of those implications has not been empirically verified. Therefore, the point of culmination of the present study could be the point of commencement for the future researchers i.e. they may undertake fresh studies to validate the effectiveness of marketing strategies proposed in the present study.

2. The findings of the present study pertain only to Indian consumers and hence, replicative studies in other countries would help validate the findings in other cultural contexts. In fact, the cross-cultural studies may also be undertaken to understand the differences in green attitude across the cultures.

3. The present study focusses on young consumers in whose case previous studies have observed that influence of religiosity is limited to only spiritual aspects and does not affect their practical decision making (Vitell et al., 1991; Fullerton et al., 1996; Rawwas and Singhapakdi, 1998; Boyatzis and McConnel, 2006; Stoppa and Lefkowitz, 2010). Hence, the future researchers
are advised to re-validate the relationship of religiosity with EC for consumers across different age groups.

4. The future researchers may also involve respondents at different levels of educational qualifications. This would help in the proper understanding of the role of education in green purchase decisions of the consumers.

5. Another stimulating theme for the future studies is to explore the linkage between the attitude of consumers towards green products and their actual purchase behaviour. It also needs to be explored whether the attitude per se leads to actual behaviour and if it does not, it needs to be looked into as to what are the factors that act as a barrier to consumers’ commitment for the actual purchase.

6. Researchers also need to embrace longitudinal studies in order to capture attitudinal shifts in consumers over a period of time.

7. Finally, to get deeper insights, future researchers need to replicate this work in the context of specific product categories such as electronics, automobiles, organic foods, etc.

6.6 Summary of the Chapter

The findings of the present study can help marketers of green products, especially in the Indian context, to design strategies. There are two types of strategies proposed. The first strategy is ‘mild greening strategy’ for the consumers who do not currently hold positive ATGP and second ‘aggressive greening strategy’ for the consumers who already hold positive ATGP. It has also been recommended that emotional appeals would be more effective than a rational appeal for the marketing of green products in India. The directions for future researchers have also been listed. Some of these directions are: the researchers in future can undertake cross-cultural studies and longitudinal studies; explore ATGP in specific industries; and explore the link between green purchase attitude and green purchase behaviour.