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DECISION-MAKING FOR SELECTION ON MERIT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The case at hand is about one reputed college belonging to one of the states from western part of India, which selected a lady Assistant Professor, initially on a full time regular post but was never given an appointment to that effect compelling her to work on part-time or lecture basis for a whole year and then in the subsequent year the institution appointed an ineligible candidate in her place. The original selection of the qualified candidate was done by duly constituted selection panel but the same was changed by the next selection panel. Fulfilling all the necessary eligibility conditions and being originally selected by the duly constituted panel, this candidate was denied the initial full-time appointment. In the subsequent year the same post was unwarranted re-advertised and another unqualified candidate was selected as against this qualified candidate to the same post. On account of such injustice, the originally selected candidate after exhausting all other remedies such as representations was compelled to approach the High Court by way of Writ Petition. The matter was considered by the High Court and the claim of the originally selected candidate was upheld by the Honourable High Court ordering the employer to issue the necessary appointment order to the Petitioner. This is a classic case for the failure of recruitment and selection process in a government-controlled institution arising out of bad decision-making where the norms of selection based on merit were not followed by the institution. The case being cited here brings to light what consequences result when the well-established principles for recruitment and selection are flouted due to faulty decision-making by an organization seeking to recruit personnel. The facts of the case and decision taken are detailed out in the case study. The author's perception is also expressed in the proceeding section wherein the author has criticized such faulty and flawed decision-making by the organization letting it being drawn into litigation and suffering a loss of face for its failure in pursuing correct decision-making. This case is an example where the faulty decision making by the organization paved the way for an employee to drag the organization to Court and prove that the decision of the organization in employing an unqualified candidate, after first selecting a meritorious candidate, was guided by extraneous factors and not merit, compelling the organization to reverse its faulty decision, thereby ensuring justice to the protagonist.

DECISION-MAKING FOR SELECTION ON MERIT

Vinita Parkar had been eagerly awaiting the Appointment Order from the Institution's head in June 2009 to the full time post of Assistant Professor in the subject of Hindi. She had successfully cleared the interview held in May 2007 but for the two intervening years she was appointed on contract with the oral promise that once the approval is received from the State University she would be given the regular appointment. Thus despite having selected this candidate on merit the institution did not appoint her to the post and instead, in the month of May 2009 Vinita was asked to submit for yet another interview for the same post on the pretext that the interview held in May 2007 was no more valid due to lapse of two years. As she was given the assurance that this fresh interview, consequent to a new advertisement for the same post, was a mere formality and would not affect her earlier selection, Vinita had willingly appeared before the new Selection Panel.

She was also aware that apart from her there was no other qualified candidate for the post appearing for this fresh interview. However, in June 2009 she was shocked to learn that though she was continued as an Assistant Professor on contract, another person was appointed to the regular full time post of Assistant Professor in the subject of Hindi. Vinita could not fathom how despite her earlier selection on merit and despite she being the only eligible candidate at the latest interview, someone else and obviously one who was not eligible, could have been selected for the full time regular post while she was retained on a temporary contract post.

Vinita Parkar who was born in 1982, came from a rural background from a state in western India. She was the eldest daughter of parents who were farmers eking out their existence by toiling on their small ancestral piece of agricultural land. Vinita was a first generation learner. Her

parents had no schooling but were progressive in their outlook of educating their daughter. Her early life was spent in utter poverty and in the rural underdeveloped region of one of the least developed parts of the state. She had completed her schooling in the government school in her ancestral village. Her desire was to become a teacher and it was kindled by her Hindi language school teacher who was very caring and supportive towards. It was this inspiration that had set her on the way to college and university education. Vinita had graduated from college in 2001 majoring in Hindi. Thereafter in 2003 she had completed her Master's degree in Hindi from one of the well-known universities of the region. Immediately in 2004 she had enrolled for Ph.D programme under the same state university and also joined as an Assistant Professor on temporary clock-hour basis in one of the colleges affiliated to this university intending to make a career in higher education as a teacher.

Her dream was to become an Assistant Professor in Hindi and knowing well that to achieve this goal she needed to clear the National Eligibility Test (NET) conducted by University Grants Commission (UGC) of India she had started persevering towards this end. She subjected herself to rigorous study to prepare for clearing the NET. Just around this time she got married to a close friend and a colleague Rajiv who like her, was also a teacher of Hindi and also a first generation learner from the same region. Vinita passed her NET exam in the year 2006 and was awarded her Ph.D in 2007. Hence she had succeeded in getting herself fully qualified to be selected and appointed as an Assistant Professor in Hindi by June 2007.

The opportunity for employment as Assistant Professor in Hindi came in May 2007 with an advertisement in a local newspaper in her state and being fully qualified and eligible she had applied for this full time position in one of the oldest

and a premier institution of higher education on the west coast of India.

Being fully qualified and eligible for the post, the Selection Committee had selected her on merit and recommended that she be appointed to the post of Assistant Professor in Hindi subject on starting pay of Rs.8000/- basic in view of the advertisement dated 29.04.2007 and consequent to the interview held on 12.06.2007.

The Principal not only kept the appointment in abeyance for almost two years but went ahead and unwarrantedly issued an advertisement dated 07.05.2009 and even held fresh interview on 02.07.2009 attempting to change the recommendation of the Selection Panel of 2007 by getting the new Panel to recommend another candidate who was not qualified, since she did not possess NET.

In view of the recommendation of this new Selection Committee, the Principal on 30.07.2009 forwarded the name of the other candidate to the region's State University, for approval, for her appointment on full time basis despite the fact that she did not possess the requisite qualification, namely NET. The University communicated vide letter dated 26.08.2009 to the Principal that the other candidate was not qualified for the post as (regular/full time basis), as she was not having required minimum qualification of NET/SET or M.Phil or Ph.D. The Principal, despite this communication continued to keep the other unqualified teacher on the full-time post and the Vinita on a temporary contract post.

Hence even though the Vinita had the requisite qualification of having passed NET examination she was not recommended by the new Selection Panel under the chairpersonship of the Principal, and instead had recommended an ineligible and unqualified candidate for a full-time regular post. The other teacher selected for the post did not possess either NET/SET or M.Phil or PhD and was in no

way eligible for appointment to a full-time regular post of lecturer. Given the fact that the Vinita possessed all the eligibility requirements for the post of lecturer, there was no reason and or ground to consider the candidature of any other unqualified person by the authorities of this college. Given the original recommendation made by the duly constituted Selection Committee in clear and unequivocal terms for the academic year 2007-08, the recommendation and report of the Selection Committee for the year 2009 was not tenable and was prima facie a totally flawed decision.

Clearly the very basic right of Vinita was violated by the decision of this new Selection Committee. This caused a great deal of stress and agony to Vinita who was struggling for many years to achieve her dream of becoming a teacher in a college. Having been denied the appointment Vinita made efforts to represent her case before the College and the University authorities but to no avail, as the College was not willing to relent from the decision taken by it through the new Selection Panel. The College authorities had continued to prefer the unqualified candidate to occupy the position leaving Vinita no other option but to challenge the same before the regional High Court by way of a Writ Petition. The wrong decision by the authorities of the institution denied Vinita her rightful appointment to the position. The only way left for her to secure her right to employment and to keep her dream to make a teaching career in higher education field alive was to fight.

Vinita was extremely upset and disappointed that despite having all the requisite qualifications, including NET and PhD, a candidate who did not possess any of these, but merely a Master's degree was given the position which was not merited by that candidate. The sole perpetrator of this situation was the faulty decision of the authorities. For a girl who came from a poor rural background and who had

struggled for years to achieve every qualification and requirement for a career in higher education, the future suddenly seemed quite bleak and gloomy. But she was never the one to give up. She had always believed that hard work and determination is the only way to true success. She had always learnt that adversity is an opportunity to overcome it and show one's true mettle and inherent strength. Though the opportunity seemed to be slipping out of her hands, Vinita still had deep faith that she will still be able to achieve her dream of becoming a teacher at an institution of higher learning under the University.

Vinita Parker looked back and her whole struggle as a first generation learner came back to her mind vividly with all the sacrifices she and her family had made to help her reach the pinnacle of higher education. But now it all seemed in vain as an undeserving candidate was unscrupulously appointed to a position of Assistant Professor she deserved the most. She suddenly realized that she was pitted against the most powerful forces of the Institution where she intended to make her career and wondered whether she could ever win against such injustice. She began to feel depressed and defeated and wondered whether she could ever win this yet another battle to achieve her dream of becoming a Professor. Her husband reassured her and promised to stand by her in any decision she may take to secure justice. Now with slim chances of a permanent job and a young child, Vinita was not sure what course to follow. This was not an easy decision to take even though her husband was very supportive; she was not sure which course of action to take considering their adverse financial condition.

Vinita therefore decided to consult a professional person who is well-versed in such service matters and who could help her out with her problem. She decided to meet him and therefore sought an appointment. But something extra-

ordinary happened as she left to meet that person that evening. While sitting in the auto rickshaw on her way to meet that person to explain her case, she suddenly recalled the inspiring lines from one of the most impactful poems, titled "Koshish Karnewalon kiharnahihoti" by a great Hindi poet and writer, Dr Harivanshrai Bacchan, the father of Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bacchan :

"The boat that fears the waves never gets across

But those who try despite all odds are never defeated

The tiny ant that carries a grain and climbs a wall

Slips and falls a hundred times, but never gives up,

It soars and slips, then slips and soars until it reaches its goal

A diver who scours the deep for pearls comes up empty many a times

It is not so easy to get pearls from so deep the waters

But his hands are not always empty 'cause one who tries never always fails.

So until you succeed sacrifice your sleep and rest

Never run away from the battlefield 'cause you won't win unless you try

For those who try never fail."

The following options loomed before her:

1. To go for an expensive and most likely prolonged legal remedy
2. To again represent to the higher authorities of the University, such as the Registrar, Vice Chancellor and Chancellor for justice.
3. To apply for openings in other institutions which respect merit and get appointed on merit.

PERCEPTION OF THE CASE

WRITER

Having sought professional advice Vinita realized that the best option before her was a legal battle. She was now more than ever determined to fight the battle for justice. She had now made up her mind to pursue the legal battle despite all odds and

when she met the lawyer who was specialist in service matters words flowed out of her mouth freely and courageously. The lawyer was convinced about the merit of her case and agreed to take up the matter before the High Court in the form of writ for enforcement of her fundamental right to livelihood and against arbitrary and discriminatory decision of the College which had denied her the appointment.

A Writ Petition was presented before the High Court under the Articles 14, 16, 226 and 227 of the Constitution of India seeking the protection of her fundamental right to livelihood as provided under Article 21 of the Constitution. The College, being a grant-in-aid institution receiving public funds from the Government, and the State University being an instrumentality of the State came within the ambit of the Writ jurisdiction of the High Court and the case came to be admitted by the High Court against the College and the University. The Petitioner Vinita Parkar, in her Writ Petition had prayed for issuance of Writ of Mandamus or an order or a direction commanding Principal to appoint the Petitioner to the full time regular post of Assistant Professor on regular pay scale as applicable to the said post from the academic year 2009. The University pointed out to the High Court that the appointment made by the College of an unqualified candidate was against the established norms and hence violative of the UGC and University recruitment rules.

The case was argued over several days and the High Court heard the concerned parties on 17.6.2009, 24.7.2009 and 28.8.2009 and reserved the passing of the judgment for a later date. There seemed to be a glimmer of hope to Vinita against the bad decision of the authorities. The High Court having heard the all the concerned parties, finally passed orders on 13.10.2009. The High Court held that the appointment of the other candidate to the post was without merit, arbitrary and hence unlawful and that the post should be

rightfully be given to Vinita Parkar who was fully qualified and eligible for the appointment. The High Court ordered that Vinita Parkar be appointed to the said post with effect from June 2009 and paid all dues for the period from June to October 2009. The University was ordered to accept the appointment of Vinita Parkar as legitimate and meritorious.

Based on the orders of the High Court, the College immediately terminated the unlawful appointment of the other candidate and issued the Order of Appointment to Vinita Parkar. The University also immediately issued the approval for the appointment of Vinita Parkar as the Assistant Professor in Hindi. Finally Vinita Parkar got justice but not without fighting for it.

This is therefore a classic example of failure of rule based decision making by the appointing authority. The case resulted in not only acrimony between the petitioner and the authorities but also exposed the College to ridicule and criticism by the High Court as well as the University and even the teaching fraternity and society at large.

It is said that a “stitch in time saves nine”. But here is a case of an institution due to flawed and faulty decisions taken, in contradiction to well established norms such as appointment of candidate on merit, became the butt of ridicule which could have been avoided by a just decision-making by concerned authorities. This could have prevented scorn in the eyes of the court and the public. The fundamental or root cause of this entire happening has been flawed decision-making which apparently was guided by extraneous, motivated and even malicious considerations. Such decisions cause the reputation of an organization to take a serious beating and lowers the good name and good image of an organization in the eyes of the society.

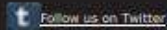
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Educational Repercussions due to Covid-19 in Hospitality Institutes

Jyotsna¹ & Sandip Madkaikar²

Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has extremely affected the education system, which is a basic contributing factor towards the country's economic future. The focus of this research is to study how hospitality educational institutes imparted education to its students, despite the lockdown. In times of an emergency, a suitable and feasible education practice is what is required for the aptitude building of young minds. It has become important now, for educators to identify the right strategy to help students to cultivate skills that will drive their employability, productivity, health, and well-being in times to come, and ensure overall progress of India. The growing concern of hospitality educators towards a transition from traditional teaching methodology to an online education system has been addressed in this paper. Hospitality education being a skill based program, needs to adopt a blended learning approach. The concept of a Virtual hotel will help enhance the learning experience for hospitality education aspirants.

Key Words: Blended learning, COVID-19, Online teaching tools, E-learning, Virtual hotel, Hospitality Education

1. Introduction:

With the spread of novel corona virus (COVID-19) around the world, there are strong visible imprints on all sectors from small enterprises to big ones. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic (Cucinotta, D. & Vanelli, M., 2020) and issued health safety guidelines to be strictly followed by everyone. Hotels luxury services, economical lodging facilities, restaurants, daily wage laborers', vendors and hawkers- everyone has been affected by this contagious virus. The world has almost come to a standstill. Lockdown in the country was a very wise step taken by the Government of India to safeguard people from this deadly virus. However, many faced hardships during this period, some were deprived of food, some lost their jobs, migrants walked their way back home, transportation was shut, restaurants, malls, grocery shops, etc were shutdown. The government ensured that people stayed home in order to stay safe and stop the virus from spreading.

Study in China found that young people could be potential carriers of the virus without them knowing about it, thereby putting others at risk (Dong Y et al., 2020). Social distancing was advised and people had to stay away to keep the virus away. Practice of physical distancing had to be followed. To safeguard everyone's health it was necessary to temporarily shut down the educational institutes, but for how long? Uncertainty in answering this question led to brainstorming within the educators.

In India a teacher is referred to as Guru, the one who imparts true knowledge, and student as Shishya. This guru shishya (teacher – student) relationship is to purely impart values, knowledge, principles and wisdom. According to Hindu Vedas, "*Vidvatva, Dakshata, Sheel, Sankranti, Anushilan, Sachetva, aur Prasannata – ye saat Shikshak ke gun hai*" translates to: Scholarship, efficiency, modesty, solstice, persuasion, awareness, and happiness – these are the seven qualities of the teacher. Hence it was a major decision to be taken by the educators, who have the responsibility of the entire education system. Apart from students, the educators are also answerable towards parents, stakeholders and the government, in implementing the correct strategies to ensure that education is imparted continuously keeping in mind the health aspects of students, teachers and staff.

The solution teachers came up with was to continue with the education system with a transition from the classrooms to a virtual world using technology, i.e. the Internet. Faculty members are already in the process of transformation to online teaching platforms. So that learning doesn't come to a standstill.

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Many hospitality institutes across the country are still unsure about reopening and have either postponed or canceled all campus events such as workshops, conferences, sports, seminars, expert talks and other activities. Some institutes have neither thought of imparting education using suitable means. Whereas on the other hand there are many other institutes in India who have quickly responded to this situation and proactively organized themselves to conduct regular classes, tests so that the education system is not hampered. There have been challenges in adhering to the new system of online education.

One of the most obvious source of imparting education in this time of physical distancing was to use the internet. Technology has evolved and we are in an era where we do not need classrooms to impart education, one can sit at home and still gain all the knowledge required.

This research is to bring forth the challenges faced by both such categories of educational institutes, and analyze observations which could be used in future to face situations in times to come.

In this research, delivery of education through the internet or web based learning is variously termed as, “online learning,” “e-learning,” “computer based learning,” “cyber learning,” “distance learning,” “blended learning,” “virtual learning,” etc.” We considered these terms to be synonymous and used them interchangeably throughout this research. Also the terms “teachers”, “faculty” and “educators” have be used interchangeably throughout the research.

Hospitality is a people based industry, which believes in exceeding guest expectations, customer delight and creating life experiences.

To prepare students for such an industry, by conducting online classes is a real challenge for the teachers. Hence the teachers must be first trained to conduct effective online sessions. The faculty who is used to face-to-face teaching method now has to adapt to online teaching in order to encourage students to accept virtual learning as a tool to gain knowledge, considering the curriculum of the course.

1.1 Hospitality Education In India: Structure And Program Curriculum

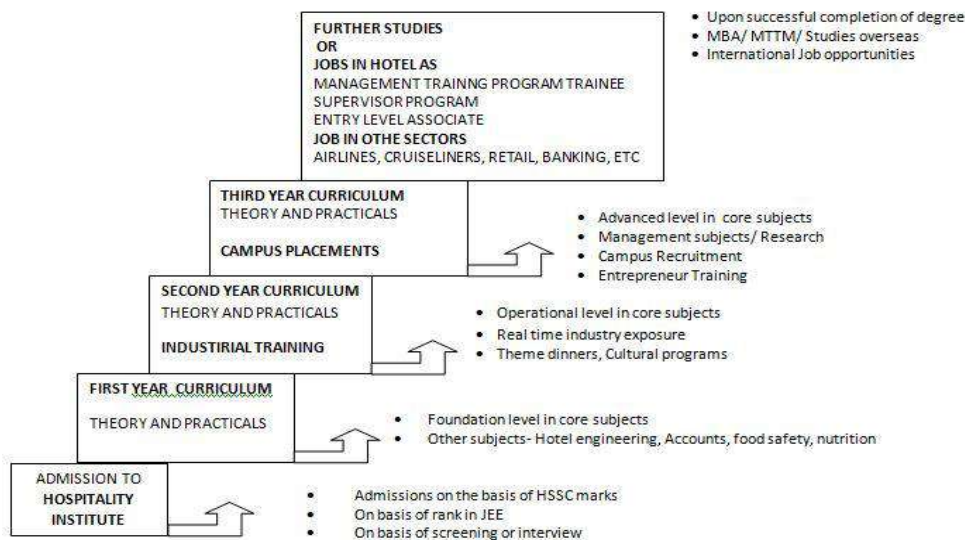


Figure 1. Diagram explaining basic structure of hotel management institutes in India

Hospitality management also referred as Hotel Management is a 3 year degree program, which certifies pursuant with a Bachelor’s degree i.e. popularly termed as, BSc Hospitality and Hotel Administration. The four core subjects or pillars of any hotel management institute are Front Office, Accommodation Operations, F& B Service and Food Production. Core departments form the base or foundation of the curriculum at hotel management institutes. Each subject has dedicated hours of theory as well as Practical sessions. In practical sessions, students are trained face –to- face, under the supervision of a faculty. Mistakes are corrected and rectified on the spot, showing them the right way to perform the task in order to acquire essential skills. Learning these skills are necessary to get into this profession. Learning through observation, practice and application of skill under professional supervision is how every hotel management institute functions. Theoretical knowledge can be imparted using online media; however the practical aspect has to be learned through observation and hands on practice. Being a skill oriented program, having equal emphasis on theory as well as practical sessions, delivering the course online becomes challenging. An individual is groomed for the industry by rigorous training which happens at the institute as well at the industrial exposure training, which is a mandatory element of any hotel management institute.

The program (Fig.1) is structured in such a manner that, the student is trained and groomed at the institute first. Upon successful completion of training at the institute, student is sent to the industry to get real time exposure or on the job training. Students get exposure in all the core departments as an Industrial Trainee. Those specializing in a subject get exposure in their core department. Industrial training exposure is a crucial/critical phase where an individual can decide which particular department is suitable for him to join upon completion of studies. The choice of department depends on his or her likes/dislikes, the way he/she finds the job, the zest or passion within an individual. On completion of industrial training the student comes back to the institute for further studies. Advanced skills and knowledge is imparted in this final year and students conduct and organize various theme dinners, cultural nights, food festivals, etc by making best use of the skills they have gained so far. Upon completion of the 3 year program they are recruited by the hospitality industry as skilled manpower. Hotel management graduates not only join hotels, rather they are hired by various other industries such as Aviation, Retailing, Cruise liners, Banking, and many more.

2. Review of Literature

In today's educational context, the delivery of education via the Internet or Web based learning platforms is not a new concept. In fact, this medium of education delivery is much sought after by students and many academics now accept and use this environment. Many universities are already running on-line courses for different stream and fields. Systematically designed with assignments and grading system as MOOC Courses (Massively Open Online Courses). These online courses are categorized according to the perceiver, 1st category is for the ones who have enrolled in an institute to obtain a degree or a recognized certification and the 2nd category is for the ones who willingly want to upgrade his/her educational qualification, to excel at work or seeking a promotion, the later being termed as Massively Open Online Courses (MOOC)(Mc Auley et al., 2010).

Online learning is a form of distance learning or distance education, which has been a part of the American education structure, and it has become the biggest sector of distance learning in recent years (Bartley & Golek, 2004; Evans & Haase, 2001). Since physical distancing is the need of the hour, online learning is most suited or sought after method of teaching.

The pandemic has resulted in massive job losses. In recent past during similar situations of crisis, it has been observed that there has been an increase in enrollment for online courses (Allen and Seaman, 2013). The authors feel that the sudden rise in enrollment for online courses has many underlying reasons to it, some of which are, intense competition at workplace, fear of losing jobs, lack of good jobs, upgrading educational qualification, etc. Universities and Institutes across India have been organizing webinars, workshops, guest lectures, etc during this pandemic situation, which is in turn making people more familiar with online education. People are getting used to the technology as it is the safest means of communication and interaction, especially in these times.

Use of internet as a medium for teaching in institutes can be observed as a new innovative approach adopted for imparting education. This pandemic has given an opportunity to all academicians, lectures, teachers, and mentors, facilitators to break the traditional face-to-face learning environment and to create an entirely new picture of this education system. Everywhere we can see a shift in learning. Simultaneously this activity requires a thoughtful analysis for designing & delivering the course curriculum/instructions on web on-line platform (Khan, 1997).

Clearly the role of the educator either in a classroom face-to-face teaching or online setting is to make sure that some sort of educational process occurs amongst the learners who are involved. In the traditional classroom setting, the teacher's role is generally to impart knowledge to learners (Relan & Gillani, 1997). In the on-line platform, the role of the teacher becomes that of an educational facilitator (Sherry & Wilson, 1997).

Due to lockdown and the demand of the present situation has realized the need to update the teaching skills, practices and strategies in order to meet the changing needs of the learners. E-learning to be a successful and hassle free experience for both the facilitator and the students, it is important to plan the entire processes with thoughtfulness (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010) in their research have talked about the best practices for effective on-line teaching and how an online instructor should be like? The authors have provided a clean model to achieve the same. Improving Quality of Online Teaching and Learning (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010).

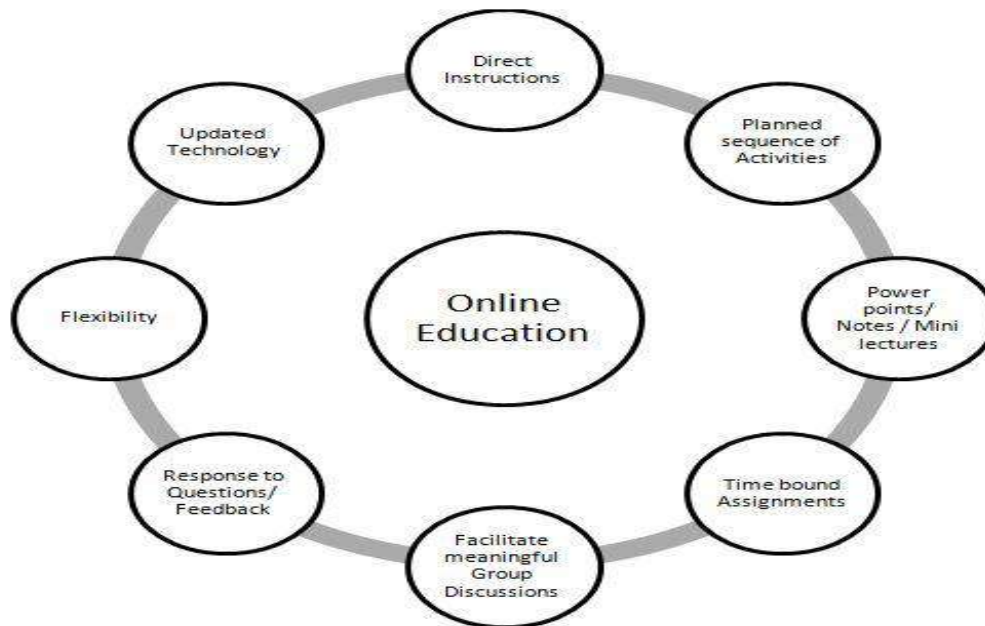


Figure 2. Improving Quality of Online Teaching and Learning

The key to enhance quality of online education is to ensure that the sessions are well structured and have to be well planned by the instructor. Online resources need to be managed efficiently. Figure 2 illustrates some of the best practices that could help improve the quality of Online Teaching and Learning Methods (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010; Bailey & Card, 2009).

- **Direct instructions:** Instructions about the session should be crisp and clear. Housekeeping rules have to be mentioned and followed.
- **Proper sequence of activities:** Learner should be aware of the entire sequence of the session.
- **Power point presentations/ Lecture notes / Mini lectures:** Power point presentations should be clear and visible. Content should be minimal and slides should not be overcrowded with information. Uniformity in slides is essential, in terms of fonts, design, layout, etc. Objectives and Learning Outcomes of the session have to be mentioned and achieved. Notes for the session should be handed over to the students well in advance. Short videos or clips may be used to cut out monotony.
- **Setting timelines for Assignments:** The Instructor should set a timeframe for every assignment and activity assigned to the student. Evaluation and feedback for the same has to be shared timely and in a prompt manner.
- **Facilitate meaningful group discussions:** The Instructor should encourage and also monitor group discussions, by creating small groups so that the discussion is meaningful.
- **Provide timely response to questions and Feedback:** Instructor should always be approachable and should reply to questions and emails in a timely manner. Efficiency in providing feedback in a constructive manner to facilitate learning.
- **Flexibility:** Technology is not always reliable and the instructor should be flexible to accept delays due to software issues, power cuts, connectivity issues, etc.
- **Adapt and update with technology:** One of the essential requirement of a good instructor is to always be informed about updates in technology, and adapt with the same.

As per study done by, (Sun et al, 2016) students prefer blended/ hybrid courses over traditional classroom based courses. Students are also given credits for completing selective online courses. This has been one of the criteria, when it comes to select an institute to study in the US. Offering Massive Open Online Courses to the public for free of cost was an initiative of Universities to encourage public participation in online education (Sun et al, 2016).

2.1. Educators Challenges In Transition From Face-To-Face To Virtual Teaching

Uncertainty of recovery from this pandemic, made institutions think of an alternative way to conduct regular sessions, tests and other study related activities. Imparting Education using the internet was an immediate solution that most of the institutes came up with. In order to conduct such sessions, it is necessary that the teacher and the learner, both have internet connectivity and should be familiar in using this technology. Teachers had to undergo a major shift in their teaching style, from the face-to-face style of teaching they had to shift to virtual teaching.

This major change came up with many challenges, hardships and difficulties for both, teachers as well as the students. Although this approach of teaching and learning is a makeshift or a temporary arrangement to cope with the situation, such that curriculum and the education system remains on track. In these challenging times it is important to understand that, how will the hospitality educators impart trade skills to the students using virtual media. Since Hotel Management is a skill oriented program, imparting the entire program online is a challenge, hence it can be a type of blended learning.

In order to get used to online teaching- learning, teachers need to supplement their traditional classroom sessions with the use of technology. Internet based activities, Multimedia simulations, virtual labs, online tests and quizzes, webinars are some technologies which teachers should make use of regularly apart from imparting face-to-face classes (Arabasz and Baker, 2003).

Designing, structuring and delivering online education is not an easy task, to deliver an online session it takes much more time in comparison with preparation time required for a face to face session. Hence the teaching load assigned to an online instructor should be in consideration with the preparation time that it takes to structure an effective session (Crawford F et al., 2012). Most of the educators are working on a trial and error method to conduct online sessions, and would definitely be more effective if proper training is imparted on a timely basis.

2.2.E-Learning Tools/Platforms:

GoToWebinar, GoToMeeting, Google Meet, Zoom , Cisco Webex , Google classroom , Google forms, Microsoft Teams , MyAnatomy , MOOC Courses etc.

2.3. Government Contribution towards Online Education

The government of India, on 20th March 2020, in an initiative on COVID-19: STAY SAFE, through Digital Learning Initiative of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), announced that there is a need to promote digital learning, as educational institutes are closed. Students can continue their learning by making full usage of the available Digital / e-Learning Platforms. On 21st March 2020, MHRD issued another notice, subject to: Preventive measures to achieve “social distancing”: permission to teaching and non-teaching staff to work from home. Which mentioned that faculty, teachers, researchers, staff, can work from home and their priority has to be, developing online content, for online teaching and online evaluation. Also this time has to be utilized to write articles, research, work on projects like “Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat”, etc

In a Press Information Bureau, dated 18th May 2020, the Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs of India Smt Nirmala Sitharaman –said *“Investing in human capital is an investment in productivity and prosperity of the nation”* The government wants to take this opportunity to integrate technology at every stage to add innovation in curriculum and pedagogies. Learning for all is what the government wants to ensure in all geographical locations across the country. Also the Union Human Resource Development Minister-Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, mentioned *“One nation , one digital platform”* and *“one class one channel”* will ensure reach of quality education to farthest corners of the country. The government has given priority to the education sector. The government wants to expand e learning in higher education, online component will be raised from 20 % to 40 % in Universities, Open and Distance Learning programs. Nearly 3.7 crore students will be benefitted by this enhanced learning methodology. The government has also decided to prepare a new National Curriculum and Pedagogical Framework for school education, teacher education, as per global benchmarks. On 21st May, 2020, the HRD Minister also mentioned that, 82 UG and 42 PG Non-Engineering MOOCs will be offered in the month of July 2020, Semester on SWAYAM. Students can avail credits by completing these courses as per UGC’s present regulations and guidelines for online learning courses.

Statement of India at the G20 Extraordinary Virtual Education Ministers’ Meeting held on 28th June 2020, mentions that India has one of the largest education systems in the world with 1028 Universities, 45000 degree colleges, 1,300,000 schools, 10 million teachers and 330 million students. India has always promoted educational collaboration in the world. The government of India also acknowledges the ongoing initiatives and educational solidarity put forward by educators, institutional leaders, families, and communities involved in supporting continued learning during this crisis. It also recognizes the critical role of higher education institutions in leading research that can deliver life-saving preventive measures and treatments for COVID-19. As the Indian spiritual leader “Swami Vivekanand” has said that the tougher the struggle, the more spectacular is the victory.

Various platforms provided by the government to promote online/ digital education are: Swayam, Swayam Prabha, Diksha , Virtual Labs, E-Pathshala, National Digital Library, E-Vidya.

The HRD Minister was delighted to announce that, *“Access to the National Online Education Platform SWAYAM and other Digital Initiatives of HRD ministry has tripled in the last one week”*. Other education portals are also experiencing very large access rates.

The increase in access rate suggests that students are availing online/ digital mode of education and by giving a free access to such platforms the government is also encouraging and promoting the use of online education to everyone across the country.

2.4. Parents and Students Role in Online Education

Teacher bullying is an issue when it comes to online education. This is a malpractice which should not occur as the teachers have been taking effort to get used to this new technique of teaching. Students should understand and if possible give constructive feedback instead of discouraging or bullying. The educators have increased the learning curve to its peak, using online teaching methodologies which will be refined gradually. The role of an educator has shifted to a content delivery person rather than a coach or a guide.

Interference of parents in the sessions by making wrong comments on the teachers is another challenge teachers are facing, the parents stuck at home during this lockdown are commenting on the efficiency of teachers. The teachers were very much responsive to this situation of pandemic and there could have been a possibility where there could be no teaching at all. However in some cases within a span of 15 days teachers came back with online classes. We are in times where content can be delivered using mobile phones. Online learning is here to stay for long term.

Many parents in India feel that it's the responsibility of the teachers to teach their children. The parents have to be informed that since online learning happens from home, the child has to study from home to cope with the curriculum delivered online. It also becomes the parent's responsibility to facilitate their children to use online resources appropriately and not misuse it.

The growing gap between educational institutes and parents can be addressed through Parent teachers meetings, which can be held online, to understand and address issues that each one is facing. Communication with parents is important as they should understand that online education is here to stay and they need to facilitate their child to adapt to this change.

Earlier education was school let, where parents complimented the school, now online education is school initiated, and parents need to facilitate it.

Students have to be prepared to accept online education. Most important factors in online education are, Self-discipline, Self-motivation and Self-direction. Students should be able to read on their own, and should be capable of using the internet.

Effects of online education on students are, it may affect their mood, some may experience sleeping problems, and affects posture if not taken care of. Many students have the habit of using online platforms for playing video games and using social media even after attending sessions for the stipulated time, hence exposure to the screen for prolonged time may affect eyesight.

Education has become more accessible than before. Content can be referred and accessed by the click of a button, which was not so accessible a decade ago. According to an article by GLocal Thinking, Millennials and Centennials are more comfortable with online education. For them it's like playing a game. Adaptation is possible by setting a learning pace, and then online learning is not a problem. Offline trainers do not have much exposure, whereas online companies have a great chance. There has been an increase in the online learning apps in recent times, learning apps like Byjus, Udemy, Unacademy, etc are gaining popularity and the users are increasing day by day.

2.5. Advantages V/S Disadvantages Of Online Education

The immediate shift from classroom education to work and learn from home resulted in an exponential use of the internet as a medium to conduct regular classes. Mandatory sessions ensured that synchronous learning took place and took care of the issue of absenteeism. Issues with internet connectivity, power failure, health, monetary problems, breakdown of audio visual gadgets, were some challenges faced in this entire process. However the work of Moore & Kearsley (2012) on "distance education" has solved all the issues of asynchronous learning. However the ever evolving technology has got us to a level where online teaching and learning will be the next preferred model to be used in our education system. Through this research the authors have highlighted various online platforms and techniques that could be used in future as an effective teaching-learning tool.

Hotel management being a skill oriented and people oriented subject, needs to be delivered in a very effective manner. According to a researcher H Li, (2009) discussed that "e" in e-learning should not only stand for electronic; it should be an abbreviation for "evolving, enhanced, everywhere, every time and everybody." In fact, the quotation shows most of the advantages of e-learning for learners and instructors. Finch & Jacob (2012) stated some of the best practices and positives of online teaching methodology.

Best practices of online education stated by Finch and Jacobs, 2012 are:

- Reduces time and saves the cost of travelling.
- Collaboration with professionals and experts worldwide.
- Flexibility for students to access courses anytime.

However the authors feel that there are many more benefits to using online education listed as follows:

- Making the best use of technology to impart education.
- Saves resources like paper.
- Student and teacher can be in their own comfort zone delivering / receiving education.
- More focus and concentration – in comparison to a classroom environment.
- Teacher has more control over the sessions.
- Accuracy and ease in evaluation
- Weak students can take the session multiple times as per their convenience.
- Monitoring performance of teachers and students becomes easier.

Easy access and flexibility in taking online sessions may be a reason for high absenteeism in online education system. The issue of absenteeism can be tackled to a certain extent by the use of Blended learning (Liu et al, 2016) which combines the traditional brick and mortar classroom sessions along with online sessions.

As mentioned, E-learning as an immediate approach of teaching and learning is a makeshift or a temporary arrangement to many of the institutes (A Sife et al., 2007). Learning is more effective in computer based education in comparison to the traditional classroom method. In e-learning it is evident that the grades scored by students directly depend on the effectiveness of the session delivered, for which the instructor has to be adequately trained (Wlodkowski 2008; Demiray, U. 2010). Untrained instructors may be a barrier in the entire e learning process (M. Samir et al., 2014).

The VCS (video conferencing sessions) sessions are still more ‘bumpy’ and teacher-centered in comparison with face-to-face sessions. Group and whole-class discussions are characterized by longer silences and minimal or shorter student responses. Sometimes become more of “one way communication” only. This becomes difficult because of the large class size and sometimes students turning their cameras off due to privacy concerns, limiting paralinguistic communication (Peachey, 2017).

2.6. Concept of a Virtual Hotel

Imparting skills in a hospitality institute so far has been a face-to-face scenario. However in order to impart basic and advanced skills there is a need to develop a workplace simulator (a virtual hotel) in which students can practice ‘real world’ tasks- including problem solving, customer relations, interpersonal skills and various other operational procedures like reservations, restaurant service, bed making, order taking, cocktail making, preparing a recipe, and so on (P Penfold et al., 2007). The authors feel that just like video games there is a need to develop a Virtual Hotel where the program or the gaming app will be designed by software developers along with industry experts and hospitality educators.

Teachers can teach and demonstrate numerous skills, and students can use those skills and knowledge to practice and experience different hotel scenarios which they would come across in actual hotel environment. Completing tasks/assignments, assessment of tasks, achieving targets, completing levels, challenging situations, great graphics, optimum sound and picture quality, should be the features of the virtual hotel application. Moreover the focus should be on application of skills, which are learnt theoretically and how efficiently it is used in real life situations. The concept of a virtual hotel will emerge as a tool of innovation in such critical situations where imparting skills in person becomes challenging.

3. Methodology:

The authors have taken consideration of all the primary data resources available. Data from various websites, books, notices, announcements, research papers, articles, etc have been accessed to gain an insight on the latest update on COVID -19 pandemic. Information was gathered on hospitality and online education, shared by the government related to academic/education sector. Authors have actively attended webinars & online meetings to understand the concern& challenges faced by educators and students during this pandemic.

Webinars on hospitality education and hotel industry was a platform for various educators and industry experts to share their views on the topic. Information from various platforms helped the authors to get an insight of the current situation.

Understanding the education system in India, and the shift from traditional classroom sessions to online sessions, helped authors analyze effective management of online resources towards imparting education in hospitality institutes and the “New Normal ” face of the Hotel Industry.

4. Findings:

Hotel management being a skill and theory based program, is very well suited for blended learning, wherein certain days of the week can be allotted to impart practical sessions whereas theory sessions could be conducted online. While conducting practical sessions, one should ensure small batches of students, adhering to physical distancing norms issued by the government. Also flipped classroom session approach ensures effective education as, it exposes students to online content first and learning continues in a face to face environment, ensuring effective learning (Ramnanan et al., 2017). Such an approach towards education in times of difficulty will ensure students taking care of their education and also their health likewise. Blended learning approach towards education is the need of the hour and has to stay here in the long run.

COVID-19 has impacted most of the industries and all segments of life. Although it has disrupted the entire education system, however on the other hand it has also facilitated the use of technology in education. The pandemic has made us realize that online education system has its advantages as well as disadvantages. Internet accessibility has been a prominent issue in India that has led to unstable learning among students from various geographical areas. Hence, there is a need to enhance internet connectivity and build a stronger online education system to be prepared for any upcoming disasters in future (S. Goswami , 2020).

5. Conclusion:

There are high possibilities of online education to stay and grow. E-learning has developed rapidly with development of internet. Presence of online education will grow among educational institutes, however the present curriculum will require modification, and alterations suitable for effective online delivery.

In this pandemic situation, it is a collective responsibility of the teachers, government, parents, and students to accept the fact that online education is for Real. It is not a stop gap arrangement and one has to value it. One needs to have a positive mindset towards online education. It is the responsibility of the parents to spend time with their children and tell them to consider online education as a routine, work assigned needs to be completed on time. It is also the responsibility of students, to be focused and utilize this time appropriately for gaining necessary knowledge and skills using online/ digital education.

Students are at the perceiving end of the education system, considering Millennials and Centennials, developing a virtual hotel is the need of the hour. This will help hotel management institutes to impart considerable amount of knowledge and skills to the learner. Also considering the fact that this generation of students are tech-savvy and quick at adapting innovations and technology, they will definitely benefit and learn more using the virtual hotel.

Though this pandemic has totally disrupted top to bottom procedures, systems, rules, guidelines of education, but has given a new face to education system in the form of its “digitalization” .And this new normal education system has all the required potential to take it a step forward.

6. Future Scope of the Research

Considering students feedback, is essential while designing e-learning platforms, and further studies could be done on the same. There is a scope for further research to be done on teaching methodologies adopted by other disciplines likewise hospitality education. Moreover this research can be taken forward to study the effectiveness of online teaching or learning from the educator’s point of view.

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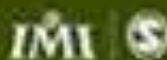
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Greenwashing Understanding Among Indian Consumers and Its Impact on Their Green Consumption

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Abstract

The consumer markets for green personal care products have been expanding rapidly in the past decade and so are the greenwashing practices of the companies. More and more companies are engaging in greenwashing, misleading consumers about their environmental performance or the environmental benefits of a product or service. As the discussion around greenwashing practices has grown in the past few years, consumers have become conscious of their choices and have started understanding the greenwashing practices of companies. The purpose of this empirical study is to assess the greenwashing understanding in Indian consumers' green purchase behaviour and the effects of receptivity to green advertising, environmental consciousness and personal norm, using structural equation modelling. The findings confirm that the level of greenwashing understanding moderates the relationship between receptivity to green advertising and green purchase behaviour. Additionally, the findings provide that income level has a significant impact on environmental consciousness and green purchase behaviour relationship. The study has possible implications for advertisers, government and other agencies.

Keywords

Green purchase behaviour, greenwashing, green consumers, receptivity to green advertising, environmental consciousness, personal norm, personal care products

Introduction

Ramesh and Suhani off late have started looking at environmental benefits while choosing their personal care products. During their recent visit to the supermarket for buying monthly groceries, they head towards the personal care section of the store. Suhani goes to the aisle shelving creams and moisturisers and Ramesh goes to the soap/body wash aisle. A particular moisturiser catches Suhani's attention that reads 'Natures Gentlest Moisturiser'. She picks the same to check the details on the flip side of the packet. She is very particular about the chemical reactions on her skin and likes this product, as it is chemical-free and has vitamin B, C and E for

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healthier and younger-looking skin. Ramesh picks up a shower gel that reads, '100% natural soap for preserving earth's environment'. The packaging of the product also specifies that it is environmentally friendly and helps reduce CO₂ and save water. Ramesh being environmentally concerned immediately chooses the product and puts it in his shopping basket.

Ramesh has chosen the green product because he was concerned about the environment, whereas Suhani has purchased a green product because she wants to avoid any harm to her skin or body. Both of these purchases are stemmed from the perceived value that green is good for the people and the environment. This is not just the story of Suhani and Ramesh. Many consumers, today, are choosing green products based on similar perceptions of value.

Perceived values guide the consumers' choice and are important criteria in making personal judgements (Butler et al., 2016; Sheth et al., 1991; Varshneya & Das, 2017). The consumers like Suhani and Ramesh, while choosing the green products, are considering health, safety, hedonic and environment-related values (Ghazali et al., 2017).

Green consumption is looked at as a solution to the problems of over-exploitation of natural resources (Kates, 2000; Nguyen et al., 2019; Wu & Chen, 2014; Varshneya et al., 2017) and as a means to reversing environmental deterioration (Liu et al., 2012). People, who have higher concern for the environment, are seen to change their purchasing behaviour as a step to improve the environment (Chase, 1991) and are consciously seen to prefer products that are greener (Peattie, 2001; Schlegelmilch et al., 1996). Consumers, who are conscious about health aspects, prefer products that support their efforts of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and thus engage in healthy behaviours (Becker et al., 1977; Newsom et al., 2005).

Today, consumers have become more aware of the hazards of synthetic chemicals on their health and environment. This has accelerated the urge for a healthier lifestyle and demand for organic personal care products (Ghazali et al., 2017). Consumers with high health consciousness are now considering green products that are safe to skin and body and are genuinely concerned with the ingredients used to make the product (Johri & Sahasakmontri, 1998).

Additionally, green has become a focal point due to increased concern among people regarding sustainability-related issues (Ottman, 2011), and this term is widely used as an umbrella term to represent aspects such as eco/environment-friendly, sustainable, organic, natural, chemical-free, etc. (Han et al., 2009, 2011; Laroche et al., 2001; Ottman, 2011; Pizam, 2009; Roberts, 1996). Green consumption is perceived as being intertwined with discourses on long-term sustainable development (Kim et al., 2012; Lee, 2008). Green consumers are people who avoid any product (a) which may harm or cause damage to any living organism, (b) cause deterioration of the environment during the process of manufacturing or during the process of usage, (c) consume a large amount of non-renewable energy or (d) involves unethical testing on animals or human subjects (Elkington, 1994). Green consumers send signals to product manufacturers about their environmental behaviours through their green consumption decisions and thus forcing organizations to change their marketing strategies (Chen & Chang, 2013).

In this context, organizations engage in multiple practices that involve forms of green marketing. This includes selling products and/or services based on their environmental benefits (Rahbar & Abdul Wahid, 2011), green or eco-labelling that displays the green benefits and environment certifications (Maniatis, 2015), or engaging in green branding that highlights operations/manufacturing/supply chain, including raw material procurement through their external communications (Hartmann et al., 2005).

Most of the marketing practitioners are using green elements as powerful marketing tools (Wanninayake & Randiwela, 2008). Peattie and Charter (2003) explained that green marketing informs consumers about the concept of green products. Green marketing is a much broader concept, which encompasses all

marketing activities developed to stimulate and sustain consumers' environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviours (Jain & Kaur, 2004), including product modification, changes of the production process, packaging changes (Grundey & Milena Zaharia, 2008) or promotion of eco-labels on environmentally friendly products (D'Souza et al., 2006).

Seriousness regarding sustainability in marketing and its implications was highlighted in the 1990s (Vining & Ebreo, 1992). Countries then started to advocate green consumption to have the consumer pay much more attention to their future living conditions by showing a higher preference towards eco-friendliness of products/services (Philippe et al., 2012). There is a general belief that the conventional products are non-biodegradable and non-recyclable, whereas 'green products are typically durable, non-toxic, made from recycled materials, or minimally packaged' (Ottman & Books, 1998, p. 89).

Due to the increased number of consumers' willingness to buy green, advertising the product based on its environmentally friendly features and attributes is very common (French & Showers, 2008). Several marketers distinguish their products as green. Some new brands have coming up in the market with green products, while the existing product brands expand their range with more natural and greener versions of the products (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibanez, 2009, 2010; Iyer & Banerjee 1993; McEachern & Warnaby, 2004).

Green marketing is an approach that focuses on reducing the ecological harm in the long run by way of companies' efforts to achieve corporate objectives and meet customer needs (Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001). Menon and Menon (1997), in their paper, presented the three levels of greening—strategic, quasi-strategic or tactical at the organizational level. Tactical greening involves limited changes and limited co-ordination across multiple functions, whereas strategic greening requires a holistic approach (Grundey & Milena Zaharia, 2008; Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001).

Tactical greening in most cases could be an act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practice of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or a service through a range of communications. These misleading communications are termed as 'greenwash', where consumers are deliberately misled (Bowen, 2014) or intentionally deceived with false claims (Choice, 2010), or presented with selective disclosure of positive information about a company's environmental or social performance (firm-level greenwashing) (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011).

Delmas and Burbano (2011) communicated the integration of two corporate behaviours while explaining greenwashing, which involves poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance. Greenwashing practices have been evident in organizations for many years. However, over time, the use of such practice is seen to increase, possibly because of increased demand for the green products and services that have to be fulfilled (product-level greenwashing). Considering multiple definitions of greenwashing in the literature, the definition by Lyon and Maxwell (2008) seems more suitable in the context of the current study. Lyon and Maxwell refer to greenwashing as 'selective disclosure of positive information about a company's environmental or social performance without full disclosure of negative information on these dimensions, to create an overly positive corporate image; (Lyon and Maxwell, 2008, p. 9).

In countries wherein there are no stringent laws against such practices, more cases of greenwashing are evident (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Diffenderder & Baker, 2010). Although greenwashing practices are not limited to any specific country or region, the absence of country-specific regulations leads organizations to mislead consumers through various greenwashing practices (Diffenderder & Baker, 2010). Many greenwashing examples are pointed out in the literature. Union of concerned scientists (Friedman & Mackenzie, 2004) highlighted Ford Motor company's campaign titled 'It isn't easy being green' wherein Ford projected their product as green. However, in reality, the product was known to be

the worst carbon emitter and had the worst fuel efficiency. Another case was General Electric's campaign titled 'Eco-imagination', which was criticized world over due to the company's greenwashing practices (Furlow, 2010). Nestlé's claim regarding plastic water bottles to be 'eco-shape', projected as more efficient and environmentally responsible was disregarded for being greenwashed (Bruce, 2017). Indian green consumer market is seen to be highly influenced by phrases such as eco-friendly, recyclable, natural and the like, thus guiding their product purchase decisions. Environment consciousness and eco-friendliness of brands were ranked as the highest parameter influencing shoppers (Punyatoya, 2014). India has faced the challenge of the degraded environment and has paid a heavy price in terms of health and economy (Nagdeve, 2002).

Although organizations continue to stress upon the green benefits of their products, consumers have, over time, learnt to selectively understand the authenticity of the claims made by them. Consumers do react differently to the green appeals, based on their levels of receptivity to green advertising (RGC), specifically to the green advertising format (Bailey et al., 2016). This is further supported by consumer's concern for the environment (Dunlap & Jones, 2002; Lin & Chang, 2012) and their feeling of moral obligation (Schwartz, 1977) to display green behaviour.

This study focuses on green consumption and the understanding of greenwashing in India. As India is a developing nation, there is an acute need to recognize how greenwashing is understood and the level of environmental sensitivity among Indian consumers. In addition, as India is a developing country, there is greater scope to conduct research in the field of green consumption, since the existing research mainly concentrates around developed countries. Consumption patterns in the Indian society mainly focuses on practices to protect society and environment by way of resource preservation and need-based consumption (Kumar et al., 2011). However, changed economic conditions and improved income levels have resulted in a remarkable shift in the consumption behaviour of the Indian middle class. In case a country wishes to adopt green revolution, the consumers have an imperative role to play (McDougall, 1993), considering that 30–40 per cent of environmental degradation comes through consumption activities of households (Nittala, 2014). Additionally, Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)—the legal regulatory framework—offers guidelines for the use of environmental claims in advertising in India (Fernando et al., 2014) and such conditions encourage 'greenwashing' (Baum, 2012; Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Polonsky et al., 2011), making Indian consumer market interesting to comprehend.

Aggarwal and Kadyan (2014) indicated that the average highest greenwashing sector is personal care sector (62%). In this sector, organizations engage in greenwashing claims such as 100 per cent natural, organic, recycled, environmentally friendly and paraben-free to present their product as sustainable and green (Stamm et al., 2017). Sometimes, these claims may be deceptive. Such deceptive environmental claims can help organizations sell more products and services in the short term.

This study focuses on personal care products and attempts to answer the following question:

RQ1: To what extent do green advertising, environmental concerns and consumers' norm impact consumers' greenwashing behaviour?

RQ2: To gauge the effect of how greenwashing is understood on the relationship between the independent variables' green advertising, environmental concern and PN on the dependent variable's greenwashing behaviour.

This article comprises the following sections. 'Theoretical Understanding' section leads to 'Conceptual Framework' for hypothesis development. The 'Methodology' section details the data collection and analysis procedure and the 'Results and Discussion' section presents the findings of the measurement

model and the structural equation model. The 'Findings and Implications' section offers findings and implications. The 'Limitations and Future Directions' section provides possible avenues for further studies.

Theoretical Understanding

Green Purchase Behaviour

In recent years, green purchase behaviour (GPB) has been discussed in the context of the purchase of environmentally friendly products or sustainable products that do not harm the environment and society or are recyclable and beneficial to the environment (Chan, 2001; Mostafa, 2007; Rejikumar, 2016). Several previous studies have focused on factors such as purchase intention, attitudes, man-nature orientation, responsibility, affective and cognitive response, and collectivism that influence GPB (Chan & Lau, 2000; Dagher et al., 2015; Kim & Choi, 2005; Lai & Cheng, 2016). It is seen that consumers display core green behaviours by giving importance to quality and price and choose products and brands that adopt conservation practices and display environmental concern. Prior studies on GPB have mainly focused on understanding the attitude-behaviour gap in green purchase decisions.

Receptivity to Green Advertising

RGC is the extent to which consumers pay attention to and are favourably disposed and responsive to advertising that uses green messages in the marketing of products or a company itself (Bailey et al., 2016). There are different forms of green appeals in advertising and consumer's reactions to these different forms of appeals differ considerably (Banerjee et al., 1995; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998; Schuhwerk & Lefkoff-Hagius, 1995; Stafford et al., 1996). Organizations use green advertising to communicate their genuine attempt to minimize the environmental impact of their brands and products (Carlson et al., 1993). Basis of this understanding, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: RGC has a significant positive relationship with GPB for personal care products.

Environmental Consciousness

Environmental consciousness (EC) is defined as the degree to which a person is oriented towards concern for the environment (Dunlap & Jones, 2002). It refers to the psychological factors that determine individuals' propensity towards pro-environmental behaviours (Zelenzy & Schultz, 2000). Sharma and Bansal (2013) comprehended EC to be a mental state research variable. EC is particularly 'turning ecological ethics into life practice' or making ecological principles into habits of mind, body and heart (Bai & Romanycia, 2013, p. 105). In green purchase decisions, EC is expected to play a role, as the cases of exaggeration and fabrication of environmental benefits of products are on the rise (D'souza & Taghian, 2005). Concern for the environment is a significant predictor of pro-environmental behaviour (Roberts, 1996; Straughan & Roberts, 1999), which has led to consumers buying green products (Ellen et al., 1991) and organizations engaging in green marketing (Kautish et al., 2019; Mishal et al., 2017). On the basis of this understanding, we propose the following hypothesis.

H2: EC has a significant positive relationship with GPB for personal care products.

Personal Norm

PN is defined as a moral obligation to perform or refrain from specific actions (De Groot & Steg, 2009; Schwartz & Howard, 1981, p. 191; Stern, 2000). PN is thus behavioural self-expectations that are experienced as feelings of moral obligations and is a powerful motivator of environmental behaviour (Hopper & Nielson, 1991; Stern & Dietz, 1994; Vining & Ebreo, 1992). In green production-related literature, the PN is assessed for its role in contributing to environmental preservation by recycling, reusing green products (Nguyen et al., 2018) and has a significant impact on consumers' attitude towards green products (Chen & Chai, 2010). PNs are found to be particularly related to pro-environmental behaviour (van der Werff et al., 2019) and may be related to green consumption. Extending this understanding to GPB, we propose the following hypothesis.

H3: PN has a significant positive relationship with GPB for personal care products.

Understanding Greenwashing

Green advertising has increased almost tenfold in the past 20 years and nearly tripled since 2006 (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). At the same time, more and more firms are engaging in greenwashing through their advertising by misleading consumers about firms' environmental performance or the environmental benefits of a product or service offered by them. Greenwashing is a continuous depiction of environmental claims through imprecise advertisements that lead consumers to question corporate honesty (Furlow, 2010; Jog & Singhal, 2019). From the company's perspective, greenwashing is associated with selective disclosures in which companies disclose only good environmental strategies and actions and conceal negative ones (Torelli et al., 2020).

It is worrisome that various environmental aspects of products, particularly sustainability, are not verifiable even when consuming products that falsely claim them. Companies' too mislead their consumers, regarding the environmental benefits of their products or services, by way of greenwashing (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Shahrin et al., 2017). Greenwashing can make a company look more environmentally friendly than it is (Topal et al., 2020). Greenwashing is 'a specific subset of symbolic corporate environmentalism in which the changes are both merely symbolic and deliberately so' (Bowen, 2014). Lyon and Montgomery (2015) stated greenwashing to range from slight exaggeration to full fabrication. However, consumers, over time, have become aware of the greenwashing, due to which organizations are losing their sales and customers' trust in the long term (Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis.

H4: Levels of Greenwashing understanding has a significant positive effect on the association between RGC and GPB.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework examines the relationship between the variables in the study and is demonstrated in Figure 1.

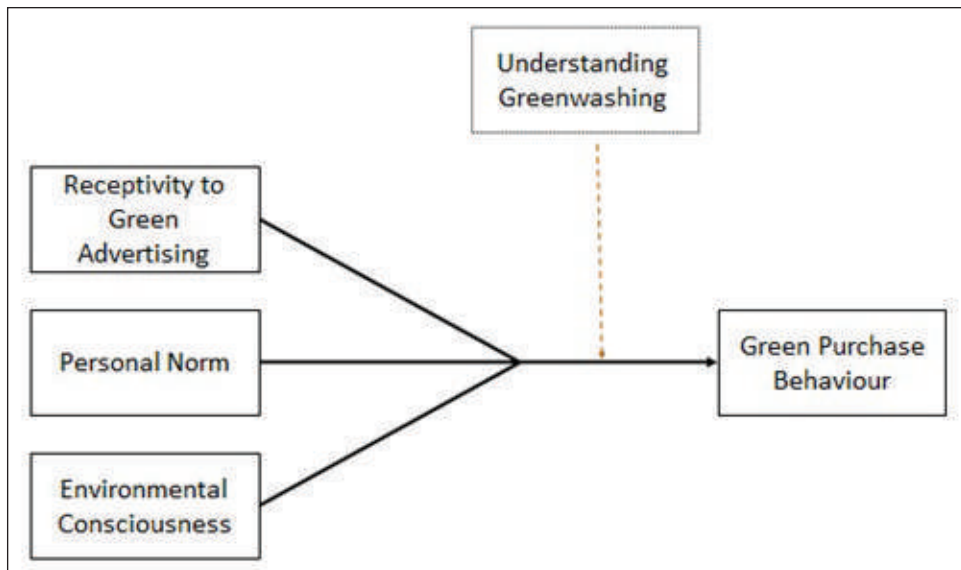


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework of Green Purchase Behaviour

Source: The authors.

Methodology

This study was carried out in India, which is poised to become the world's most populous country by 2025 and has a larger consumer base showing preferences towards responsible consumption or green consumption. In the light of green consumerism at the global level, Greendex (2014) survey found that consumers in developing economies like India and China show a higher preference for green products compared to developed nations like the USA. Neilson's survey (2011) acknowledged the Indian consumer's rising preference towards eco-friendly products (Jaiswal & Singh, 2018). Moreover, this is evident in the healthy growth in the personal care market due to the changing lifestyle of Indians in recent years (Sudhakar & Rani, 2013).

In this study, personal care products were chosen for this research for the following reasons. Second, the personal care sector is the average highest greenwashing sector (62%) (Aggarwal and Kadyan, 2014); and in this sector, organizations engage in greenwashing claims such as natural, recycled, paraben-free in order to present their products sustainable and green (Stamm et al., 2017). The market size of India's beauty cosmetics and grooming is expected to touch US\$35 billion by 2035 from the current level of US\$6.5 billion says the joint study that was undertaken by ASSOCHAM–MRSSIndia.com (Anupama & Suresh, 2018).

Therefore, it is obvious that consumers' favourable attitude towards sustainable products and their increased level of ecological concern (EC) compelled Indian and Asian firms to shift from a conventional marketing approach to green marketing as a driver of eco-advantage with the movement of global green competitiveness (Chan, 2001; Chen & Chai, 2010; Jain & Kaur, 2004; Mostafa, 2007).

Data Collection and Sample Profile

A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data and examine the proposed model. The items used to operationalize various constructs used in this study were picked up from existing validated scales. This study context was the survey questionnaire designed for self-reporting of the consumers' observations and experiences while purchasing green personal care products. All of the scales were formulated based on a 5-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' (1) and 'strongly agree' (5).

GBP was adapted from Jaiswal and Kant (2018)—4-item scale—and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.814. RGC was adapted from do Paço et al. (2019)—9-item scale—and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.903. EC scale was adapted from Papista and Dimitriadis (2019)—3-item scale—and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.805. PN scale was an adaptation from Nguyen et al. (2018)—6-item scale—and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.858. A 5-item scale was adapted from Leonidou and Skarmeas (2017) to measure greenwashing, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.906. The data collection period in the study lasted from June 2019 to September 2019. Subsequent data screening involved examining missing data and outliers.

The purposive sampling approach was used to administer the 250 questionnaires among the adult and educated group of consumers (age 18 or above, most of whom were either graduates or postgraduates); however, 173 were found to be suitable for this study. Young adult and educated subjects were chosen as they could understand the green phenomenon and could answer the questionnaire properly (Chan, 2001; Yadav & Pathak, 2016). The survey tool was tested through a pilot study on 30 Indian consumers, and their recommendations were adopted in designing the final instrument to avoid ambiguity in the field survey.

The demographic profile of the respondents showed that 106 (61.27%) respondents were male and 67 (38.72%) were female out of the total 173 respondents; majority of them (31.79% and 42.77%) were in the age group of 25–34 years and 35–44 years, respectively; 9.82 per cent were in the age group of 18–24 years; and other age groups totalled 16.76 per cent.

Results and Discussion

To assess the measurement model, all constructs were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (maximum likelihood estimation) using AMOS 22.0, and SPSS 25 was used for other analysis. The resulting fit statistics were all above the minimum acceptable level. Chi-square/degree of freedom (CMIN/df) = 191.004/141, 1.355; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.973; incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.973; root mean square of error of index (RMSEA) = 0.045; Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.967; and goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.901. All the factor loadings are above 0.5 (as shown in Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability of Scales and Convergent Validity

	Latent Variables and Items	Items	FL	$\hat{\alpha}$	CR	AVE
1	Receptivity to green advertising			0.885	0.877	0.589
2	I tend to pay attention to advertising messages that talk about the environment (strongly agree–strongly disagree —5-point Scale)	RGC2	0.75			
3	The use of green messages in ads affects my attitude towards the ads (strongly agree–strongly disagree—5-point scale)	RGC3	0.71			

(Table 1 Continued)

(Table 1 Continued)

	Latent Variables and Items	Items	FL	α	CR	AVE
4	I respond favourably to brands that use green messages in their advertising (strongly agree—strongly disagree—5-point scale)	RGC4	0.77			
5	I am the kind of consumer who responds favourably when brands use green messages in their ads (strongly agree—strongly disagree—5-point scale)	RGC5	0.79			
9	I tend to pay attention to green advertising messages (strongly agree—strongly disagree—5-point scale)	RGC9	0.81			
II	Level of understanding of greenwashing			0.906	0.908	0.663
1	Most companies mislead with words about the environmental features of their products (strongly agree—strongly disagree—5-point scale)	GW1	0.83			
2	Most companies mislead with visuals or graphics about the environmental features of their products (strongly agree—strongly disagree—5-point scale)	GW2	0.85			
3	Most companies provide vague or seemingly un-provable environmental claims for their products (strongly agree—Strongly Disagree—5-point scale)	GW3	0.83			
4	Most companies overstate or exaggerate the environmental features of their products (strongly agree—strongly disagree—5-point scale)	GW4	0.81			
5	Most companies leave out or hide important information about the real environmental features of their products (strongly agree—strongly disagree—5-point scale)	GW5	0.75			
III	Green purchasing behaviour			0.814	0.822	0.537
1	When I want to buy a product, I look at the ingredients label to see if it contains things that are environmentally damaging (strongly agree—strongly disagree—5-point scale)	GPB1	0.7			
2	I prefer green products over non-green products when their product qualities are similar (strongly agree—strongly disagree—5-point scale)	GPB2	0.68			
3	I choose to buy products that are environmentally friendly (strongly agree—strongly disagree—5-point scale)	GPB3	0.77			

(Table 1 Continued)

(Table 1 Continued)

	Latent Variables and Items	Items	FL	α	CR	AVE
4	I buy green products even if they are more expensive than the non-green ones (strongly agree–strongly disagree—5-point scale)	GPB4	0.78			
IV	Environmental consciousness			0.845	0.848	0.737
3	I feel I have an ethical obligation to avoid brands and companies that pollute the environment (strongly agree–strongly disagree—5-point scale).	EC3	0.80			
4	I feel I have an ethical obligation to support the purchase of environmentally friendly products (strongly agree–Strongly Disagree—5-point scale).	EC4	0.91			
V	Personal norm scale			0.847	0.857	0.669
3	Buying products that damage the environment would be morally wrong for me (strongly agree–strongly disagree—5-point scale).	PNS3	0.82			
4	Buying products that affect the environment would go against my principles (strongly agree–strongly disagree—5-point scale).	PNS4	0.91			
5	People like me have a responsibility to contribute to environmental preservation by avoiding products that damage the environment (strongly agree–strongly disagree—5-point scale).	PNS5	0.71			

Source: The authors.

Note: FL: Standardised factor loading; α : Cronbach' alpha; CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted.

These indices revealed a good model approximation to the sample data.

Structural Equation Modelling

Construct validity was examined using convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was assessed by examining if (a) standardized factor loading values were above 0.5; (b) CR was higher than AVE, and CR was above 0.7; and (c) AVE was above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). (Table 2).

As presented in Table 1, the relevant data revealed strong convergent validity. Also, as presented in Table 2, the square root of the AVE of each measure was greater than its bivariate correlation coefficients with other constructs; thus, discriminant validity was ensured (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, all correlations between constructs were less than 0.9, indicating that possible problems of multicollinearity were non-existent (Grewal et al., 2004).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Discriminant Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	GPB	RGC	PNS	EC	GWU
GPB	0.822	0.537	0.326	0.827	0.733				
RGC	0.877	0.589	0.326	0.924	0.571	0.767			
PNS	0.857	0.669	0.433	0.952	0.504	0.428	0.818		
EC	0.848	0.737	0.433	0.964	0.557	0.446	0.658	0.859	
GWU	0.908	0.663	0.167	0.974	0.409	0.141	0.173	0.238	0.814

Source: The authors.

Note: Diagonal value indicates the square root of AVE of the construct.

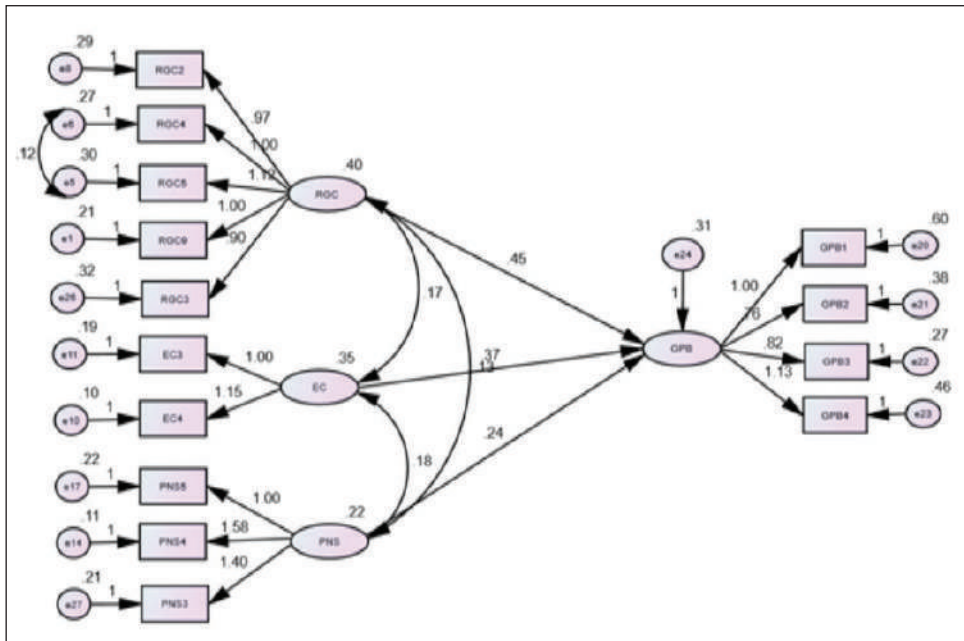


Figure 2. Factor Loadings and Path Coefficients

Source: The authors.

As observed in Figure 2, the three independent variables RGC, EC and PN were assessed for understanding its impact on GPB of respondents. As presented in Table 2, the composite reliability (CR) values for all the first-order dimensions were greater than the suggested threshold of 0.80. In addition to this, in all the cases, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were greater than the suggested threshold of 0.50. These findings supported convergent validity and reliability of the measured constructs.

Testing for Moderating Effect

To test the moderating effects of the greenwashing understanding on the impact of the three determinants on GPB, multi-group social cognitive mapping (SCM) was employed. In this study, the corresponding data were divided into two groups using the median split method: those who had a low greenwashing understanding: ($n = 109$) and those having a high greenwashing understanding ($n = 64$).

Model Fit measures suggested by Gaskin and Lim (2016), using AMOS Plug-in were exercised to conduct the analysis.

Tables 3 and 4 compare the moderation effect of greenwashing understanding of the proposed structural model.

Results of the Moderating Effect of Greenwashing Understanding

It is observed in Table 4 that there is a significant difference in the two models on the RGC–GPB relationship.

The study found that the two groups of respondents had high and low greenwashing understanding and differed significantly in their GPB based on their RGC. Further, it can be concluded that higher the level of greenwashing understanding, RGC resulting in GPB is higher. In cases where the level of greenwashing understanding is low, the RGC resulting in GPB is also low.

Table 3. Testing the Moderating Effect of Greenwashing Understanding

Standardized Regression Weights			High Greenwashing Understanding	Low Greenwashing Understanding
			Estimate	Estimate
GPB	←	RGC	0.579	0.324
GPB	←	EC	−0.039	0.41
GPB	←	PNS	0.179	0.156

Source: The authors.

Table 4. Z-score to Assess the Relationship Between the Two Groups on the Basis of the High and Low Greenwashing Understanding

			High GW Understanding		Low GW Understanding		Z-score
			Estimate	P	Estimate	P	
GPB	←	RGC	0.907	0.001	0.279	0.004	−2.137*
GPB	←	EC	−0.06	0.831	0.418	0.004	1.515
GPB	←	PNS	0.301	0.324	0.216	0.238	−0.239

Source: The authors.

Note: Coefficients are significant at Alpha = 0.01, **coefficients are significant at Alpha = 0.05, ***coefficients are significant at Alpha = 0.10.

Table 5. Z-score to Assess the Relationship Between the Two Groups on the Basis of the High- and Low-income Understanding

			Low Income		High Income		Z-score
			Estimate	P	Estimate	P	
GPB	←	RGC	0.504	0.001	0.419	0.007	-0.388
GPB	←	EC	0.131	0.547	0.668	**	1.813*
GPB	←	PNS	0.385	0.154	0.047	0.82	-0.991

Source: The authors.

Note: Coefficients are significant at Alpha = 0.01, **coefficients are significant at Alpha = 0.05, ***coefficients are significant at Alpha= 0.10.

Income Moderation

Thus, there is a significant difference in the two models on GPB -EC relationship basis income (Refer Table 5). It can be concluded here that higher the income level, EC resulting in GPB is higher. In low- and middle-income cases, the EC resulting in GPB is also low.

Findings and Implications

This article makes an important contribution to greenwashing research. Delmas and Burbano (2011) stated that more and more firms have been combining poor environmental performance with positive communication about environmental performance. Although a few existing studies assess the content of green advertisements in the Indian context (Fernando et al., 2014), this study advances this understanding to further relate them to the level of greenwashing understanding among Indian consumers. The primary aim of this article was to assess the levels of greenwashing understanding of the determinants of GPB in the Indian context. Specifically, this study sought to better understand how RGC, PN and EC impact consumers' GPB of personal care products. The moderating effects of greenwashing understanding of the relationship between GPB and its determinants were also examined. Furthermore, the study supports and extends the findings of the limited number of studies concerning the Indian consumers. The potential beneficiaries of this research, therefore, include consumers as well as those interested in understanding the determinants of GPB, including marketers, advertisers, government and other agencies. The government gets to benefit from the consumerism process, as it is directly related to the GDP of a nation. Consumerism in a way leads to increased business opportunities, thus leading to employment generation. Greenwashing, however, may lead to increased harm to the destination environment due to unawareness of the actual impairment that it causes to the environment or the health of living organisms. Hence, although there is increased purchase and sale of goods, higher costs might have to be borne in the form of environmental- and health-related degradation. Such greenwashing practices by the organizations and the level of awareness of such practices among the consumers should be considered by the government in their policy decisions so as to cause minimum environmental harm through consumption. Additionally, non-governmental agencies that work under the agenda of environmental sustainability can positively use this information to take the necessary precautions to cause minimum harm to the environment.

The first key finding of the study is that the level of greenwashing understanding of Indian consumers moderates the relationship between their RGC and GPB. This implies that consumers with higher

greenwashing understanding are more inclined towards GPB. As per the findings of this study, there is an increased understanding among consumers regarding greenwashing practices of organizations, which, in turn, has an impact on the RGC. Thus, the green consumers are particular in choosing the products due to their high levels of understanding of greenwashing. Marketers who wish to promote their genuine green products avoid such greenwashing practices to target genuine green consumers. A major problem here is that most of the Indian advertisements are 'shallow' or imprecise and promote the green image of the organization without any substantiation (Banerjee et al., 1995; Carlson et al., 1993; Fernando et al., 2014; Iyer & Banerjee, 1993; Kärnä et al., 2001).

The second key finding of the study is that while there is a higher level of greenwashing understanding, the propensity of RGC leading to GPB is higher and vice versa. This means that the more aware the consumers are regarding greenwashing, the more careful they are when purchasing their green products. Such consumers will be more careful with their product purchase decisions and will check the ingredients of the products. Studies show that Indian consumers are increasingly aware and observant regarding the greenwashing depicted through advertising and product packaging (Fernando et al., 2014). The implication for organizations is that organizations need to be careful with the message they share, as consumers understand the false messages, and organizations may lose the market share.

The third key finding of the study is an addition to the existing body of knowledge that suggests that the greenwashing understanding has an impact on the RGC and GPB relationship. However, greenwashing understanding does not significantly impact PN and EC relationship with GPB. This validates that the EC and PN are psychologically intrinsic factors, and an external factor like greenwashing understanding does not have an impact on these relationships (Nordlund & Garvill, 2003). This finding once again emphasizes on providing a genuine message regarding the environmental benefits of products or services. Our results show an increased level of greenwashing understanding among Indian consumers.

The fourth key finding is that the income level has a significant impact on EC and GPB relationships. This means that high-income consumers tend to display higher EC. Higher the income, the propensity of EC leading to GPB is higher. Income can be associated with factors like willingness to pay (Biswas & Roy, 2016). In a previous study, income was found to play a significant role in the purchase decisions of consumers (Wong & Mo, 2013).

Our research also has important implications for the green consumption literature in India. It is observed that consumers are particular regarding their choice of green products and can differentiate between green advertising messages of the marketers. It is interesting to note that in developing nations like India, consumers are selectively able to filter green messages for their greenwashing. This finding differs from the studies conducted in some of the developed nations (Parguel et al., 2015; Wilson, 2013) and is particularly intriguing considering increased greenwashing understanding among the consumers in the developed nations (Marciniak, 2009).

Limitations and Future Directions

This study was limited in several aspects. First, we used purposive sampling as a method of data collection. As such, the generalization of the study is a predicament. Second, the study was confined to personal care products only. Future research could check the proposed model concerning other product categories such as electronics, food and beverages, etc. Among other study limitations, social desirability bias may be an issue that needs attention due to respondents self-reporting. Future research could adopt a more comprehensive framework to reduce the bias when responding to a survey, or precision can be brought by using an experimental approach in future studies. Another study limitation is the use of

existing scales in the study that have been validated using a different set of data. The current study is not a product-specific study. Future research could explore a product-specific approach or may adopt a post-purchase experience-based approach to reduce ambiguity.

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