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A sustainable development viewpoint**

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

An interplay of the consumption values and green behavior in developed markets: A sustainable development viewpoint

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Abstract

Green products result from innovations aimed at designing products that cause less environmental harm, but they often come at a higher cost or are perceived as less effective. Therefore, there is a need to highlight the consumption values that trigger green product purchases. In our study, we conceptualize the consumer values, including social, conditional, and knowledge value, and investigate their effect on the green product purchase behavior among consumers in two developed countries. Our main contribution is that aside from looking at the direct impact of consumption values on purchasing behavior, we examine the mediating role of contextual factors that may strengthen or weaken this relationship. We consider the mediators such as environmental and health concerns, functional value, and social pressures. We compare how the mechanism underlying the interaction between consumption and green choices differs in masculine (USA) and feminine (Finland) countries. Our findings underscore the importance of integrating social and knowledge values into marketing strategies to foster green product adoption. Businesses should leverage advertising themes that resonate with customers' desire for social belonging and self-improvement.

KEYWORDS

consumption values, environmental choices, green choice, green purchases, masculinity versus femininity, sustainability

1 | INTRODUCTION

Introducing environmental sustainability into business practices and values is critical to conserving natural resources and the world's ecosystem. Manufacturers are under pressure to change their behaviors and develop ecological sustainability practices to comply with increasing demands for products produced in an environmentally sustainable manner (Blenkhorn & MacKenzie, 2017; Vesal et al., 2021). In addition, concerns about environmental pollution, resource scarcity, and waste burden emerge from the government and customer concerns (Gupta & Kumar, 2013; Sheth & Sinha, 2015). According to the

Sustainability Magazine (2022), which lists the top 10 sustainable brands yearly, firms committed to environmental sustainability, such as Adidas, Unilever, and Kering, benefitting from an improved brand image.

For companies, addressing environmental sustainability challenges in their marketing activities is crucial to increasing public awareness and competitive advantage (Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2014). The goal is to eventually find a sustainable balance between the economic activities and sustainable development responsibilities (Lehner & Halliday, 2014). Based on this responsibility and focus on sustainable business practices, many companies are now

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embracing the concept of environmentally sustainable or green products and seeking to amend their company's values, goals, and mission (Shields & Shelleman, 2015). Thus, green consumption behavior, defined as “voluntarily engaging in environmentally friendly consumer practices” (Perera et al., 2018, p. 844), has become an essential phenomenon organizations must understand to serve their sustainably-minded consumers better.

The number of global consumers citing climate change as a top-three environmental concern has risen from an average of 39% in 2022 to 46% in 2022 (Mintel Consulting Sustainability Barometer, 2022). This increase in ecological concern has significantly impacted consumers supporting green products, showing a greater readiness to purchase them (Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008; Lin & Huang, 2012; Parker et al., 2023). However, according to a Harvard Business Review report, out of the 65% of consumers who reported positive attitudes toward green products and services, only 26% bought them (Harvard Business Review, 2019). This is due to consumers' pointing out higher prices as a barrier to green consumption. Narrowing this “intention-action gap” is essential for organizations, their corporate sustainability goals, and the planet's well-being. One way to bridge the identified literature gap is to emphasize consumption values (Yuan et al., 2022) since consumers do not buy green products solely for altruistic reasons but attach specific values to green products (Lin & Huang, 2012).

Our work contributes to the existing debate in several ways. First, it draws on Sheth et al. (1991) consumption value theory as opposed to prior studies (Biswas & Roy, 2015; Lin & Huang, 2012; Nekmahmud et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2022), which have predominately examined these values as a critical driver of green purchases, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the mechanism underlying the interaction between consumption values (social, knowledge, and conditional values) and green purchase choices. Second, emerging research hypothesized that this mechanism is influenced by culture (e.g., Chwialkowska, 2021; Chwialkowska et al., 2020; Ghazali et al., 2021; Ur Rahman et al., 2023) and called for comparative quantitative research on the subject as our understanding of how culture influences green behaviors remains limited. Mensah et al. (2024:1) recommend “enhanced or modified policy indicators that encompass the key elements of sustainable food consumption as well as a comprehensive definition of the latter to effectively design and evaluate policies on this matter.” Third, we concur with Mensah et al. (2024) that there needs to be more understanding of the context of green behavior and moderating and mediating influences that strengthen or weaken this mechanism. Such contextual factors can involve functional values, social pressure, health, or environmental concerns, and perceived influence on the environment. This study has been motivated by these gaps in the literature.

The objective of this study is thus two-fold. We first apply the theory of consumption values to study how consumption values influence purchases of green products in two different country settings, i.e., Finland and the United States. This will enable an understanding of the dynamics of consumption values in influencing green purchases across diverse cultural landscapes. This analysis is designed to fill the

research gap regarding the interaction of different consumption values (social, knowledge, and conditional) in green purchasing behavior and answers the question: *How do different consumption values interact to influence green purchase choices in varying cultural contexts?* Secondly, we compare the results from the two datasets (US vs. Finnish respondents) to verify whether country context impacts this underlying mechanism and the relative importance of different consumer values. Mensah et al. (2024) found that “SDG 12 has a strong narrative on production issues, while consumption aspects, especially food consumption, have been neglected.” Our choice of the USA and Finland was motivated by several factors. We wanted to compare countries characterized by similar purchasing power and economic development levels but that is culturally different. Previous qualitative research suggested that consumer motivations to act green differ in Nordic and Western countries (Chwialkowska, 2021) and offered the potential role of masculine-feminine cultural values and egalitarian vs. dominant relationship with nature (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Schwartz, 1992). In addition, Chwialkowska et al. (2020) highlighted the potential role of masculinity-femininity and its impact on the relationship between environmental values and concerns and social pressures and attitudes toward green behaviors. Both studies encouraged quantitative research to explore this topic further and empirically test proposed hypotheses. The study will, thus, investigate the moderating and mediating roles of contextual factors such as functional values, social pressure, health concerns, and environmental concerns in green consumer behavior. This aspect aims to enhance our understanding of how these factors influence the relationship between consumption values and green choices, addressing the research question: *How do contextual factors like functional values, social pressure, health concerns, and environmental concerns influence green consumer behavior?*

This research aims to contribute to the theoretical understanding of green consumer behavior in different cultural settings. It provides practical insights for businesses and policymakers promoting sustainable consumption practices.

The paper is structured as follows: In Section 2, we reviewed the extant literature on consumption values and their impact on green purchase behavior to develop a conceptual model for the present study. We then formulated hypotheses for the empirical investigation, again drawing on knowledge from the existing literature. Afterwards, the methodological approach used for the empirical research is presented, followed by the data analysis. Finally, the results of the empirical studies are reported and discussed, the study's overall conclusions are drawn, and its limitations and future research opportunities are presented.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As rational consumers, we consider the benefits and costs of our actions (Monroe, 2003) and try to maximize the value for money. We apply the theory of consumption values to examine which values influence consumers' buying of green products. According to this

theory, we make purchasing decisions driven by various values derived from such purchases: social, health, knowledge, conditional, and functional values. Consumer behavior research in the area of sustainability confirms that the pursuit of these values constitutes the critical driver of green purchases and green behaviors (Chen & Chang, 2012; Chwialkowska, 2021; Corbett, 2005; Han et al., 2011; Han & Kim, 2010; Koller et al., 2011; Lin & Huang, 2012; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007; Parker et al., 2023; Ur Rahman et al., 2023; Schuitema & de Groot, 2015; Tanner & Wölfling Kast, 2003; Wu et al., 2011). In what follows, we present the hypotheses on the link between consumption values and green behavior choice. In the following section, we explore how these values interact with each other in driving green purchase decisions.

2.1 | Hypotheses development

2.1.1 | Social values

Social value, as defined in marketing literature, encompasses the advantages individuals derive from group affiliations and associations with specific reference groups (Lin & Huang, 2012; Sheth et al., 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001); it also encompasses the emotional rewards that come from these associations. The concept highlights the symbolic significance of products and services in social interactions and personal identity construction. Beyond mere functional utility, these products often symbolize a person's social and economic status. When consumers choose products that represent their social and economic status, they are often driven by emotional motivations such as the desire for belonging, esteem, and identity affirmation. This symbolic value is particularly pronounced in products that are visible to others, where individuals often seek to make a positive impression on others, leveraging their consumption choices as tools for social negotiation and identity expression (Lin & Huang, 2012; Sheth et al., 1991; Tanner & Wölfling Kast, 2003).

When examining the role of social value in sustainable and green consumption, its influence becomes even more pronounced, and existing empirical evidence shows a positive link between social value and green behaviors (Biswas & Roy, 2015; Chan, 2001; Chwialkowska, 2021; Cordano et al., 2010; Lin & Huang, 2012; Parker et al., 2023; Ritter et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2014; Zhao et al., 2014). These studies reveal how green products, often considered socially commendable (Follows & Jobber, 2000), enhance an individual's image and increase their emotional satisfaction as an environmentally conscious consumer (Dagher & Itani, 2014; Lee, 2008). As such, when environmental responsibility becomes an essential trait within a social group, it shifts norms and behaviors, steering consumer preferences toward green products.

This consumer image is further linked to improved status within one's social or reference group (Steg et al., 2011, 2014; Steg & Vlek, 2009). Therefore, when one's social circle values the environment and considers green purchases desirable traits, pro-environmental social values and norms can foster intentions and

purchases of green products (Chwialkowska, 2021; Jansson & Biel, 2011; Prakash & Pathak, 2017). For example, the personal fulfillment consumers feel when recognized as environmentally conscious within their social circles can be a powerful motivator for green consumption. The emotional aspects of social value can be seen in trends such as the increasing popularity of sustainable fashion brands. Consumers are drawn to these brands not only because they signal a commitment to social responsibility but also because of the emotional gratification that comes from aligning with values important to them and their social group.

Moreover, pro-environmental social norms modulate other factors, such as environmental knowledge (Duerden & Witt, 2010). As consumers become more educated about environmental issues, their awareness of green products' health and functional benefits grows (Chwialkowska & Flicinska-Turkiewicz, 2020). An example is the rising popularity of organic foods, where increased consumer knowledge about health benefits and environmental impact drives purchasing decisions. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 1a. Social value positively influences social pressure to adopt green consumption practices.

Hypothesis 1b. Social value positively influences health-related concerns, influencing green product choices.

Hypothesis 1c. Social value positively influences the perceived functional value of green products.

Hypothesis 1d. Social value positively influences environmental concerns.

2.1.2 | Conditional value

As defined by Sheth et al. (1991), conditional value plays a crucial role in consumer decision-making, emphasizing the importance of alternatives and situational factors. This value is particularly important in green purchases, where consumers often weigh their options based on various criteria such as economic factors, environmental impact, and product availability (Lin & Huang, 2012).

The importance of conditional value in sustainability has been confirmed through empirical research, and it has been shown to influence green choices (Lin & Huang, 2012) strongly. This is particularly important in sustainability, as green behaviors are often perceived as requiring more effort (Chwialkowska & Flicinska-Turkiewicz, 2020). Green consumer behaviors can be thus encouraged when their conditional value is increased, such as when personal benefits or social value are communicated (Chwialkowska, 2021; Chwialkowska & Flicinska-Turkiewicz, 2020), as well as when monetary drivers such as discounts are employed (Boztepe, 2012; Nasir & Karakaya, 2014). A practical example is the increasing adoption of LED lighting over traditional bulbs, driven by long-term economic benefits despite higher

upfront costs. Furthermore, conditional factors such as accessibility, location, and time considerations significantly influence green behaviors (Tanner & Wölfing Kast, 2003). For example, the ease of access to the charging infrastructure of electric vehicles (EVs) makes the choice of an EV more practical and appealing to consumers.

Social desirability also plays a role in enhancing the conditional value of green products. When consumers perceive that green behaviors will elevate their social status or align with socially desirable norms, they are more inclined to engage in such behaviors (Chwialkowska, 2021). This can be seen in the fashion industry, where brands that emphasize sustainability and ethical production are gaining traction among consumers who value social responsibility. To sum up, highlighting the monetary, functional, social, health, and other personal benefits of the behavior encourages green behaviors (Chwialkowska, 2021; Chwialkowska & Flicinska-Turkiewicz, 2020; Dolnicar et al., 2017; Dolnicar et al., 2019; Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Steg et al., 2014; Trang et al., 2019). In light of these considerations, we propose:

Hypothesis 2a. Conditional value positively influences social pressure to adopt green consumption practices.

Hypothesis 2b. Conditional value positively influences health-related concerns, influencing green product choices.

Hypothesis 2c. Conditional value positively influences the perceived functional value of green products.

Hypothesis 2d. Conditional value positively influences the environmental concerns.

2.1.3 | Knowledge value

Knowledge value reflects consumers' propensity to seek information when purchasing new products (Lin & Huang, 2012). Knowledge value involves, in the case of green purchases, checking the ecolabels, verifying green certifications, and understanding the manufacturing processes and environmental impacts of products (Lin & Huang, 2012). This knowledge value reflects a deeper engagement with the product beyond its surface-level attributes.

Consumers realize the importance of making informed purchasing decisions. Thus, acquiring information plays a vital role at all stages of the consumer decision-making process (Lin & Huang, 2012). Furthermore, knowledge value decreases the risks for consumers, increases consumer confidence, and increases product involvement, positively linked to product purchases (Dholakia, 2001). For example, in the organic food market, consumers often conduct thorough research to understand the benefits and authenticity of organic labels. Similarly, in the EV market, potential buyers frequently seek detailed information about battery life, charging infrastructure, and environmental impact before purchasing. This pursuit of knowledge mitigates perceived risks

and enhances confidence and involvement in the product, subsequently influencing the purchasing decisions.

Green products are usually associated with a greater risk of not performing as well as regular products, and their reputation has suffered from greenwashing practices (Griskevicius et al., 2010; Lin & Chang, 2012; Luchs et al., 2010). Seeking more information about green products helps mitigate this negative perception. Therefore, consumer knowledge as a risk-management strategy (Dholakia, 2001) positively influences green products' functional and health value (Chwialkowska & Flicinska-Turkiewicz, 2020). The empirical research confirms a positive link between environmental knowledge and green purchases (Cleveland et al., 2012; Kumar et al., 2017; Lin & Huang, 2012; Pekkanen et al., 2018; Tanner & Wölfing Kast, 2003; Young et al., 2010). Informed consumers are more likely to recognize the functional and health benefits of green products, thus aligning their purchasing decisions with their environmental and health consciousness.

Hypothesis 3a. Knowledge value positively influences social pressure to adopt green consumption practices.

Hypothesis 3b. Knowledge value positively influences health-related concerns, influencing green product choices.

Hypothesis 3c. Knowledge value positively influences the perceived functional value of green products.

Hypothesis 3d. Knowledge value positively influences the environmental concerns.

2.1.4 | Interactional influences

Social pressure

Social pressure reflects the importance of social norms when making consumption decisions.

Social norms provide guidelines on what is socially expected or not proper. Acting against social norms carries social risks with adverse consequences and unfavorable opinions of significant others about oneself (Dholakia, 2001). Therefore, social pressure is crucial to many consumer choices, including green consumption (Biswas & Roy, 2015). For example, in communities where environmental sustainability is highly valued, practices such as recycling, using public transportation, or purchasing organic products are not just personal choices but social expectations. In such settings, individuals who adopt green practices are often held in higher regard and seen as role models, while those who do not may face subtle or overt criticism.

Previous empirical research has explored the relevance of social norms for sustainability. It was shown that social norms and the pressure exerted by significant others, peers, and opinion leaders in one's social circle are critical drivers of green behaviors (Agovino et al., 2017; Biswas & Roy, 2015). In those social groups where

pro-environmental attitudes are more prevalent, engaging in green behaviors helps one enhance one's social status and project a positive image, whereas a failure to engage in these behaviors would result in negative consequences for one's social standing (Chwialkowska, 2021; Griskevicius et al., 2010; Lee, 2008; Steg et al., 2014). Therefore, such normative influences positively affect one's propensity to engage in green behaviors (Chwialkowska, 2021; Goldstein et al., 2008; Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Mair & Bergin-Seers, 2010).

Therefore, we propose that social pressures to make green choices mediate the relationship between consumption values and green choice behavior:

Hypothesis 4a. The relationship between the social value and green choice behavior is positively mediated by social pressures to adopt green consumption practices and perceived influence on the environment.

Hypothesis 5a. The relationship between the conditional value and green choice behavior is positively mediated by social pressures to adopt green consumption practices and perceived influence on the environment.

Hypothesis 6a. The relationship between knowledge value and green choice behavior is positively mediated by social pressures to adopt green consumption practices and perceived influence on the environment.

Health concerns

Health concerns have become increasingly pivotal in consumer decision-making, particularly regarding green products. Health concerns refer to consumer health concerns and awareness of what products are harmful or beneficial to their health and whether the consumer considers these factors when making purchase decisions. (Tanner & Wölfing Kast, 2003). Consumers are now more attentive to aspects such as the origin, seasonality, locality, and environmental imprint of the items they buy, significantly influencing their purchasing choices (Goggins & Rau, 2016; Pulkkinen et al., 2016; Spiller, 2012). For instance, the rising demand for organic and locally sourced foods directly results from health concerns, showcasing a shift toward sustainability driven by health motives (Kim & Choi, 2005; Tanner & Wölfing Kast, 2003). Furthermore, in communities where organic eating is a norm, members might choose organic foods for personal health benefits and to align with the group's values. This decision-making process is influenced by the social value attached to health-conscious behaviors and the direct health benefits of the products.

Regarding conditional value, health concerns play a significant role in influencing green choice behavior. Consumers often evaluate products based on various factors, including health implications (Goggins & Rau, 2016). For instance, when choosing eco-friendly cleaning products, the health benefits, free from harsh chemicals, can

sway consumer preference, highlighting the mediating role of health concerns in the decision-making process.

Health concerns have become a critical mediator in the relationship between knowledge value and green choice behavior. As consumers become more informed about the health impacts of different products, this knowledge significantly influences their purchasing decisions.

Based on these insights, we propose that health concerns mediate the relationship between consumption values and green choice behavior:

Hypothesis 4b. Health-related concerns and perceived influence on the environment positively mediate the relationship between the social value and green choice behavior.

Hypothesis 5b. Health-related concerns and perceived influence on the environment positively mediate the relationship between the conditional value and green choice behavior.

Hypothesis 6b. Health-related concerns and perceived influence on the environment positively mediate the relationship between the knowledge value and green choice behavior.

Functional values

Functional value is a critical determinant in the consumer decision-making process, especially in the context of green products. Consumers are increasingly evaluating products not just on their environmental credentials but also on the perceived utility of the product, such as its functionality, utilitarian performance, economic utility, and value in terms of desirable product attributes (Sheth et al., 1991). For example, while being environmentally friendly, energy-efficient appliances also offer the functional benefit of reducing energy costs in the long term. Furthermore, as rational customers, our buying decisions are "driven by convenience, habit, value for money, personal health concerns, [and] hedonism" (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006, p. 170).

Empirical research confirms that when making green purchases, we focus on our self-interest and perceived added value from the products we choose (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Chen & Chang, 2012; Corbett, 2005; Schuitema & de Groot, 2015; Wu et al., 2011). Green products can deliver such desired functional and utilitarian benefits (Lin & Chang, 2012; Lin & Huang, 2012; Tanner & Wölfing Kast, 2003) and empirical research in the area of sustainability confirms that product performance, utility, and functional value are the key antecedents of consumers opting for greener options when making their purchases (Biswas & Roy, 2015; Lin & Huang, 2012; Wu et al., 2011). For example, products that offer environmental and practical benefits are preferred in social groups where sustainability is valued. Consumers often prioritize functional benefits when evaluating green products based on conditional value. The choice of green products in this context is driven by a balance between their

environmental impact and practical advantages. For instance, despite their higher upfront cost, LED bulbs are chosen for their longer lifespan and energy efficiency, showcasing the functional value's mediating role. Knowledge value also influences the green choice behavior through available value. Informed consumers tend to evaluate green products for their environmental impact and practical utility (Biswas & Roy, 2015).

Based on understanding how functional value, as a mediating factor, influences the relationship between social, conditional, and knowledge values and green choice behavior, We propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4c. The relationship between social value and green choice behavior is positively mediated by the functional significance of green products and the perceived influence on the environment.

Hypothesis 5c. The relationship between conditional value and green choice behavior is positively mediated by the functional significance of green products and the perceived influence on the environment.

Hypothesis 6c. The relationship between knowledge value and green choice behavior is positively mediated by the functional significance of green products and the perceived influence on the environment.

Environmental concerns

Environmental concern reflects the extent to which the consumer worries about the environment now and in the future. Perceived Influence on the Environment measures the time to which consumers believe their consumption decisions will impact the environment (Kim & Choi, 2005). Environmental concern translates into positive attitudes toward green product options (Han & Kim, 2010) and consumer willingness to spend more on green products (Pagiaslis & Kroutalis, 2014; Royné et al., 2011). In societies where environmental sustainability is a shared value, individual choices are heavily influenced by the collective environmental consciousness.

Furthermore, environmental concern was linked to intentions to act green (Chwialkowska, 2021; González-Rodríguez & Tussyadiah, 2021; Kumar et al., 2017; Laureti & Benedetti, 2018; Liu & Segev, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2016; Pagiaslis & Kroutalis, 2014; Segev, 2015). Consumers' choices reflect this understanding as they become more knowledgeable about environmental issues. Environmental concern is also linked to intentions to buy green products (Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008; Lee et al., 2014; Pagiaslis & Kroutalis, 2014), as well as consumer willingness to give up on or limit purchases of products that are environmentally harmful (Fraj & Martínez, 2007; Liu & Segev, 2017). For example, despite convenience factors, the choice of biodegradable products over single-use plastics illustrates how environmental concerns can influence decisions even when conditional values suggest otherwise.

Finally, the perceived influence on the environment is a significant motivator for green choice behavior. When consumers believe their actions can positively impact the environment, they are more inclined to make sustainable choices. This is evident in practices like reducing water usage or choosing renewable energy sources, where the perceived environmental benefits drive the consumer behavior (Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008; Lee et al., 2014).

Therefore, we propose that the environmental concern mediates the relationship between consumption values and green choice behavior:

Hypothesis 4d. The relationship between social value and green choice behavior is positively mediated by the environmental concerns and the perceived influence on the environment.

Hypothesis 5d. The relationship between conditional value and green choice behavior is positively mediated by the environmental concerns and the perceived influence on the environment.

Hypothesis 6d. The relationship between knowledge value and green choice behavior is positively mediated by the environmental concerns and the perceived influence on the environment.

Hypothesis 7. The perceived influence on the environment positively influences the consumers' green choice behavior.

3 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 | Data collection

We have selected a typical consumer from Finland and the United States as the subject of our empirical research. These two countries were chosen as they represent two economically developed countries, yet they are significantly different in culture and social attitudes toward the environment and sustainability. These differences offer appropriate context for our study, as our research objective was to consider how country context impacts this underlying mechanism of green consumption and the relative importance of different consumer values.

While the United States represents a country with masculine and individualistic cultural values that reflect a dominant relationship with the environment, Finland is an excellent example of a feminine culture with an egalitarian relationship with nature (Chwialkowska, 2021). As suggested by previous sustainability research, these cultural values can significantly impact our motivations to engage in green consumption (Chwialkowska et al., 2020).

3.2 | Measures

The survey items for the research are adapted from previous research. Each item is measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

The *social value* measure is adapted from the scale consisting of four items used by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) and Lin and Huang (2012). The conditional *value* measure is adapted from the scale used by Lin and Huang (2012) and focuses on the importance of available alternatives in consumer decision-making. It includes four items. The knowledge *value* measure is adapted from the three-item scale used by Lin and Huang (2012). The *social pressure* measure is adapted from the four-item scale used by Lin and Huang (2012). *Health concerns* construct draws on the work of Tanner and Wölfling Kast (2003) and consists of four items. The functional *value* measure is adapted from the scale consisting of four items used by Lin and Huang (2012). The environmental *concern* measure is adapted from the scale used by Kim and Choi (2005) and has five items. The *Perceived Influence on the Environment* construct draws on the work of Kim and Choi (2005) and consists of five. The *green Choice Purchase Behavior* construct draws on the work of Kim and Choi (2005). It comprises five items and measures whether the consumer purchases green products.

3.3 | Measure assessment

To examine the factor structure of the data, we initially used exploratory factor analysis and extracted five factors with eigenvalues above 1.0. All items loaded onto their respective factors as expected, except for an item from the social value scale. Next, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis on all items to examine the factor structure further and calculate the measures' psychometric properties. Finally, we used SmartPLS 4.0. for partial least squares (PLS) analysis, as recommended by Hair et al. (2022). Before doing this, we conducted tests of normality, which showed that none of the assumptions of the PLS analysis were violated.

We calculated Cronbach's alpha and each measure's composite reliability (CR) for the scales' reliability and convergent validity. The values for all actions were greater than 0.7, indicating reliability and concurrent validity (Hair et al., 2019). The variance inflation factors (VIFs) were also assessed. No VIF was more significant than 2.0, indicating the discriminant validity of the measures and implying that multicollinearity would not pose a problem (Hair et al., 2019). Finally, we calculated the average variance extracted (AVE) to assess the validity. The AVE for all measures was more significant than 0.5 (i.e., the threshold suggested by Hair et al., 2019). We first used Fornell and Larcker's (1981) procedure to evaluate discriminant validity. We found no correlation between measures that exceeded the square root of the AVE. Second, we used Henseler et al.'s (2015) procedure to construct the heterotrait-monotrait ratio matrix. The values in the matrix were below the threshold value of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). There was, therefore, enough evidence that the

measures met the discriminant validity criteria. The confirmatory factor analysis results and the AVE are presented in Table 1.

3.4 | Survey administration and sample characteristics

We collected responses from Finland and US-based consumers for our empirical field research. Out of Finnish consumers, we reached out to distribute survey questionnaires, and we received 550 filled replies. Our respondents are all active buyers of monthly groceries. The data collection was carried out from March to June 2022. During the same period, data was collected in the United States through panel company Qualtrics with 599 filled replies. There were all the values. Finally, our sample of USA 599 questionnaires indicates a predominance of buyers aged 16–30 years (48%). Most respondents had completed vocational training (19%) or held an academic degree (40%). The sample mainly consists of female respondents (female: 59%, male: 34%, no answer: 7%). Our sample from Finland, consisting of 550 questionnaires, indicated patients aged 50 years and older (64%). The respondents had completed high school/vocational training (19%) or held an academic degree (40%), with the remaining having school or other education. The sample almost equally consists of respondents (female: 52%, male: 48%). About 40% of respondents had four or more years of work experience. We paid particular attention to introducing our questionnaire contents to each questionnaire and explaining what was being asked to minimize potential error bias due to misunderstandings of terms and meanings of the questions and answer categories.

4 | ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 | The measurement model

We employed SmartPLS 4.0 to perform PLS-SEM for data analysis (Petter & Hadavi, 2023). This study aims to test the relationship between consumption values and green purchases and outline the underlying mechanism of this process. We also compare the results from two datasets (US vs. Finnish respondents) to verify whether two country environments impact this underlying mechanism as suggested by previous research (e.g., Chwialkowska, 2021; Chwialkowska et al., 2020).

Even though PLS-SEM estimates both the measurement and structural models simultaneously, we pursued the procedure Hair et al. (2022) recommended in evaluating models. The estimated model analysis and interpretation took place in two stages: firstly, the reliability and assessment of the measurement model, and secondly, the testing of the structural model. We validated the study measurement model as Hair et al. (2019) suggested by assessing the individual-item reliabilities, convergent, and discriminant validity. The loadings between the indicator and its latent variables first assessed the individual item reliabilities. Every item's reliability loading is greater than

TABLE 1 Discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion)—Finland.

	AVG	CV	EC	FV	GCB	HC	IEN	KV	SP	SV
Conditional value	0.687	0.829								
Environmental concern	0.659	0.746	0.812							
Functional value of green products	0.660	0.768	0.695	0.822						
Green choice behavior	0.675	0.750	0.654	0.769	0.812					
Health concerns	0.660	0.638	0.566	0.660	0.787	0.785				
Influence on the environment	0.616	0.770	0.756	0.755	0.740	0.664	0.813			
Knowledge value	0.693	0.766	0.656	0.744	0.783	0.702	0.749	0.833		
Social pressure	0.601	0.619	0.488	0.685	0.688	0.592	0.622	0.679	0.775	
Social value	0.710	0.682	0.508	0.716	0.749	0.658	0.701	0.712	0.767	0.843

TABLE 2 Discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion)—USA.

	AVG	CV	EC	FV	GCB	HC	IEN	KV	SP	SV
Conditional value	0.693	0.832								
Environmental concern	0.668	0.750	0.817							
Functional value of green products	0.681	0.769	0.698	0.825						
Green choice behavior	0.671	0.751	0.665	0.769	0.819					
Health concerns	0.610	0.635	0.570	0.654	0.786	0.781				
Influence on the environment	0.659	0.770	0.759	0.767	0.747	0.665	0.812			
Knowledge value	0.702	0.763	0.655	0.747	0.789	0.705	0.752	0.838		
Social pressure	0.595	0.628	0.523	0.669	0.637	0.580	0.652	0.679	0.771	
Social value	0.712	0.687	0.527	0.729	0.752	0.660	0.711	0.721	0.705	0.844

or equal to 0.7, as Hair et al. (2019) recommended on their respective latent variables, indicating a high degree of individual item reliability. Next, the construct reliability for each latent construct was calculated using composite reliability. The composite reliability for all items is greater than the level of 0.6 endorsed by Hair et al. (2019), thus indicating that the reliabilities of all the constructs are good. Our data also passes this evaluation, so discriminant validity is assured.

To assess the convergent validity of the reflective block of the model, Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommend an AVE with a value higher than 0.5. An AVE value of less than 0.5 is considered insufficient, as the more significant variance is due to error variance rather than indicator variance (Hair et al., 2019). As evident from Table 1, all latent constructs comply with the recommended minimum level of 0.5. Therefore, all the latent constructs were sound and satisfactorily valid. The research on PLS-SEM (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Götz et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2019) recommends that the AVE is also helpful in assessing discriminant validity.

If the square roots of the AVEs of the latent variables are higher than their correlations, discriminant validity has been established (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Götz et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2019). Our results in Tables 1 and 2 above demonstrate that the data also passed this test, assuring discriminant validity. For PLS-SEM, common method bias is detected through a complete collinearity assessment approach (Hair et al., 2019; Kock, 2015). The occurrence of VIFs greater than 3 is recommended as a pathological collinearity indicator, and it is also

a sign that a tested model may have common method bias. Therefore, if VIF values should be lower than the 3 threshold, the model can be considered free of standard method bias (Hair et al., 2019; Kock, 2015). For both models, the values of VIF were below the recommended threshold, which indicates that the model is free from common method bias.

4.2 | Structural estimates

By examining R^2 (also known as the coefficient of determination), path loadings (also known as standardized b), and significance levels, the significant effects of the structural model are evaluated (Hair et al., 2022). The independent factors may account for 76.20% of the variance in the dependent variable of green choice behavior, according to model 1's co-creation behavior, which has an R^2 of .762. The independent factors may account for 75.30% of the variance in the dependent variable of green choice behavior, according to model 2's co-creation behavior, which has an R^2 of .753. By performing 5000 bootstrapping runs, we generated t -values using the bootstrapping sampling technique (Chin, 1998). The structural model's findings are presented below in Tables 3 and 4.

The model is applied to examine how consumer values affect consumers' choice of green products. The path coefficients and t -values show a strong relationship between social and knowledge values and

TABLE 3 PLS path analysis results (Standardized beta coefficients and *p*-values), Finland.

H	Model paths	Path coefficient	SE	t-Statistics	p-Values	Label
1a	Social value → Social pressure	0.557	0.046	12.189	.000***	Supported
1b	Social value → Health concerns	0.276	0.052	5.290	.000***	Supported
1c	Social value → Functional value of green products	0.270	0.043	6.308	.000***	Supported
1d	Social value → Environmental concern	-0.088	0.047	1.865	.031**	Supported
2a	Conditional value → Social pressure	0.059	0.051	1.171	.121	Not Supported
2b	Conditional value → Health concerns	0.151	0.062	2.440	.007***	Supported
2c	Conditional value → Functional value of green products	0.389	0.061	6.401	.000***	Supported
2d	Conditional value → Environmental concern	0.618	0.049	12.585	.000***	Supported
3a	Knowledge value → Social pressure	0.238	0.058	4.141	.000***	Supported
3b	Knowledge value → Health concerns	0.391	0.061	6.431	.000***	Supported
3c	Knowledge value → Functional value of green products	0.254	0.062	4.117	.000***	Supported
3d	Knowledge value → Environmental concern	0.244	0.050	4.916	.000***	Supported
4a	Social value → Social pressure → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.010	0.006	1.627	.052*	Supported
4b	Social value → Health concerns → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.006	0.003	2.097	.018***	Supported
4c	Social value → Functional value of green products → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.009	0.004	1.981	.024**	Supported
4d	Social value → Environmental concern → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	-0.004	0.003	1.389	.082*	Supported
5a	Conditional value → Social pressure → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.001	0.001	0.795	.213	Not Supported
5b	Conditional value → Health concerns → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.003	0.002	1.687	.046**	Supported
5c	Conditional value → Functional value of green products → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.012	0.006	1.979	.024**	Supported
5d	Conditional value → Environmental concern → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.032	0.015	2.118	.017***	Supported
6a	Knowledge value → Social pressure → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.004	0.003	1.603	.054*	Supported
6b	Knowledge value → Health concerns → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.009	0.004	1.993	.023**	Supported
6c	Knowledge value → Functional value of green products → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.008	0.004	1.870	.031**	Supported
6d	Knowledge value → Environmental concern → Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.012	0.006	2.005	.023**	Supported
7	Influence on the environment → Green choice behavior	0.126	0.052	2.415	.008***	Supported
R ² Green choice behavior .762						
Saturated model						
SRMR 0.063						
d_ULS 2.680						
d_G 0.787						
Chi-square 2,452,072						
NLI 0.817						

p* ≤ 0.1; *p* ≤ 0.05; ****p* ≤ 0.01.

TABLE 4 PLS path analysis results (Standardized beta coefficients and *p*-values) USA.

H	Model paths	Path coefficient	SE	T statistics	<i>p</i> values	Label
1a	Social Value → Social Pressure	0.411	0.043	9.520	.000***	Supported
1b	Social Value → Health Concerns	0.276	0.048	5.729	.000***	Supported
1c	Social Value → Functional Value of Green Products	0.287	0.040	7.150	.000***	Supported
1d	Social Value → Environmental Concern	-0.061	0.045	1.356	.088	Supported
2a	Conditional Value → Social Pressure	0.127	0.054	2.333	.010***	Supported
2b	Conditional Value → Health Concerns	0.141	0.057	2.465	.007***	Supported
2c	Conditional Value → Functional Value of Green Products	0.382	0.057	6.667	.000***	Supported
2d	Conditional Value → Environmental Concern	0.619	0.047	13.298	.000***	Supported
3a	Knowledge Value → Social Pressure	0.286	0.055	5.192	.000***	Supported
3b	Knowledge Value → Health Concerns	0.399	0.058	6.904	.000***	Supported
3c	Knowledge Value → Functional Value of Green Products	0.249	0.058	4.287	.000***	Supported
3d	Knowledge Value → Environmental Concern	0.226	0.050	4.506	.000***	Supported
4a	Social Value → Social Pressure → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.010	0.005	1.893	.029**	Supported
4b	Social Value → Health Concerns → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.007	0.003	2.391	.008***	Supported
4c	Social Value → Functional Value of Green Products → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.012	0.005	2.468	.007***	Supported
4d	Social Value → Environmental Concern → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	-0.003	0.003	1.139	.127	Not Supported
5a	Conditional Value → Social Pressure → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.003	0.002	1.282	.100	Not Supported
5b	Conditional Value → Health Concerns → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.003	0.002	1.828	.034**	Supported
5c	Conditional Value → Functional Value of Green Products → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.016	0.006	2.399	.008***	Supported
5d	Conditional Value → Environmental Concern → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.034	0.014	2.390	.008***	Supported
6a	Knowledge Value → Social Pressure → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.007	0.004	1.924	.027**	Supported
6b	Knowledge Value → Health Concerns → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.010	0.004	2.274	.011**	Supported
6c	Knowledge Value → Functional Value of Green Products → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.010	0.005	2.215	.013**	Supported
6d	Knowledge Value → Environmental Concern → Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.013	0.006	2.186	.014**	Supported
7	Influence on Environment → Green Choice Behavior	0.146	0.052	2.807	.003***	Supported
<i>R</i> ² Green Choice Behavior .753						
Saturated Model						
SRMR 0.059						
d_ULS 2.412						
d_G 0.750						
Chi-square 2,561,707						
NLI 0.830						

p* ≤ .1; *p* ≤ .05; ****p* ≤ .01.

green purchasing behavior among consumers in Finland. Yet, the conditional value indicates that societal pressure does not affect the choices made by Finnish consumers. Both 2a and 5a are disproven. However, the social, knowledge, and conditional (social pressure) values have a substantial association with the green choice behavior in the case of US consumers. Environmental concerns and perceived environmental influence are not intermediaries in these linkages between consumers' social values and their green choices.

Moreover, social pressure and perceived environmental influence did not affect the link between customers' conditional values and their choice of green products. The theories 4d and 5a are therefore disproven. Our findings indicate that consumers behave similarly while making green decisions in both datasets. Social pressure and the perceived environmental impact of consumers do not influence decision-making.

5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Marketing scholars agree that value attributes and value creation are key to promoting green consumption (Diego-Mas et al., 2016; Gruber et al., 2014; Marcon et al., 2022). However, this literature has yet to reach a consensus on whether and which value attributes significantly influence green behavior in terms of prioritizing green product purchases. Therefore, this research contributes to understanding how value impacts green behaviors and the context of the green behavior and moderating and mediating influences that strengthen or weaken this mechanism.

Scholars called for comparative quantitative research of masculine (here represented by the US respondents) versus feminine societies (here represented by the Finnish sample) to study the influence of consumption values on green purchase behavior (Biswas & Roy, 2015; Chwialkowska, 2021; Lin & Huang, 2012; Nekk Mahmud et al., 2022). Thus, the present study advances the understanding of the interactions between consumption values (social, knowledge, and conditional) and green purchase behavior of US and Finnish respondents, as well as outlines the underlying mechanism of this process. As we compared the results from the two datasets (the US (masculine) vs. Finnish (feminine) society), we explored whether culture affects this underlying mechanism.

Our results show that social and knowledge values significantly impact green choice behavior among Finnish and US consumers in both cultural settings. These results are consistent with past findings from studies on the relationship between the social value (Biswas & Roy, 2015; Chan, 2001; Chwialkowska, 2021; Cordano et al., 2010; Nekk Mahmud et al., 2022; Ritter et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2014) and the knowledge value (Cleveland et al., 2012; Kumar et al., 2017; Lin & Huang, 2012; Parker et al., 2023; Pekkanen et al., 2018) and their impact on consumers' green choices. For example, when examining social values, i.e., projecting a good image of oneself to others, or social identity concerns and the impact on green behavior, Biswas and Roy (2015) and Nekk Mahmud et al. (2022) found that the social value is a dominant factor that influences sustainable consumption adoption

among the green preferential cluster. Social pressure, peer behavior, and social norms influence the consumer green choice behavior.

Furthermore, when it comes to knowledge value, i.e., learning about green products before their purchase, our findings corroborate those of Parker et al. (2023), who found that knowledge-seeking influences the development of consumption values. Moreover, our research complements that of Parker et al. (2023), showcasing that value-conscious consumers are more likely to choose green products based on searching for quality information about a green product. Therefore, incorporating social and knowledge values into marketing activities increases the adoption of green products. Consequently, marketing activities involving investment in instrumental green value-creating attributes tend to add value and reduce the perception of risk for consumers. These are some examples: using notions like "status-seeking" and "self-image" in advertising to appeal to customers' sense of belonging (social values). Marketers can also encourage positive word of mouth through transparent communication of pre- and post-production of green products, which would help balance the negative word-of-mouth disseminated by price-sensitive consumers. Furthermore, highlighting knowledge values, such as country of origin information and eco-labeling, were found to reduce the perception of risk for consumers and can be thus used to promote green purchases (Biswas & Roy, 2015).

Since culture influences green behavior practices, our comparative study reveals some fundamental differences between Finnish respondents representing a feminine society and US respondents representing a masculine society. In our Finnish sample, the conditional value was not found to influence green choices. Thus, hypotheses 2a and 5a are rejected. Finnish culture, characterized as feminine according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, prioritizes quality of life, well-being, and environmental harmony. These cultural traits could mean Finnish consumers are motivated to make green choices, independent of societal pressure or conditional values like cost and convenience. In contrast, accepting these hypotheses (4d) in the United States suggests that in more masculine societies, where achievement and success are highly valued, social and conditional values like status and cost-benefit analysis play a more significant role in influencing green purchasing behavior. This is in line with the findings of Biswas & Roy, 2015 and Nekk Mahmud et al. (2022).

To increase the importance of conditional values, policymakers and/or business sectors could offer incentives and promotions for green products to price-sensitive individuals. This discrepancy between samples is somewhat consistent with prior research, which suggests the impact of conditional value can be situation-specific due to a lack of consumers' awareness of the creation and promotional activities concerning green products (Awuni & Du, 2016). Moreover, as suggested by Chwialkowska (2021), maintaining harmony with the environment is internalized as a moral obligation in feminine societies, which would explain why marketing activities are less needed to promote green behaviors in Finland.

This study demonstrates that social pressure, health concerns, functional values, and environmental concerns act as mediating influences that strengthen or weaken the impact of consumption values

on green choice behavior. Health concerns, functional value, and environmental concerns, were found to impact the Finnish and US respondents positively as mediating factors. This corroborates the findings of Joshi and Rahman (2015) and Aertsens et al. (2011) concerning health concerns, and confirms that in both the US and Finland health factors act as a critical mediator of green purchases. Furthermore, functional value is also viewed as an important factor when purchasing green, which aligns with past research on the subject (Biswas and Roy, 2015; Lin & Huang, 2012). That is, the US and Finnish consumers find the tradeoff between the quality and price of green products important.

The findings that environmental concerns and perceived environmental influence do not mediate the relationship between social values and green choices in the United States and that social pressure does not influence green decision-making in both contexts is indicative of a more individualistic culture in the United States. Personal benefits and attributes of products (like quality or value for money) might override thus, environmental concerns. The lack of influence of social pressure in both contexts suggests a possible shift in consumer attitudes where green choices are becoming more mainstream and less influenced by peer behavior or societal expectations. This shift also reflects a growing individual awareness and responsibility toward environmental issues, transcending the need for external validation or social conformity.

The environmental concern is on the rise. According to the Global Sustainability Report (2021), 85% of people have changed their purchasing habits over the past 5 years to be more environmentally friendly. Additionally, 60% of consumers are willing to pay more for green products as the demand for environmentally friendly alternatives grows (Global Sustainability Study, 2021). We show that conditional value has a slightly more decisive influence than knowledge value. We then demonstrate that environmental concern plays an essential role in the mechanism through which conditional and knowledge values influence green choice behavior. Buyers with high environmental concerns tend to have higher environmental beliefs when incentives and promotions for green products are present (Lin & Huang, 2012; Parker et al., 2023).

While social pressure was found to be a mediating influence between social and knowledge values and green behavior, which is in line with studies conducted by Parker et al. (2023) and Lin and Huang (2012), our study did not find social pressure to be a significant mediating influence between conditional value and green behavior for the Finnish or US respondents. Thus, Hypothesis 5a is rejected in both samples. This may be because respondents did not feel that going green increases social approval when conditional values, such as the offering of conventional substitutes, are in place. Thus, functional values and environmental concerns are more important for their health concerns. Similar to our findings, Biswas and Roy (2015) argued that personal factors like individual attitudes and subjective norms are more influential than social pressure to purchase green products.

Moreover, our results suggest that US consumers' social values, such as social approval or peer pressure, are not positively mediated by environmental concerns and influence the environment to make green choices. As such, Hypothesis 4d is rejected. Similarly, Amin and

Tarun (2020) and Wang et al. (2018) found that social value has weak or no impact on individuals' green purchase decision process.

Finally, our results show similar consumer behavior in both datasets when making green choices. Decision-making is independent of social pressure and its influence on the environment. According to the results, the US and Finnish consumers link environmental concerns to green choice behavior. This suggests that policymakers should enhance overall consumption values to promote sustainable consumption behavior Biswas and Roy (2015). Effective communication strategies focusing on environmental concerns can, thus, improve the environmental value of purchasing green products among consumers.

All in all, our research provides some implications for business strategy. Firstly, the study underscores the importance of integrating social and knowledge values into marketing strategies to foster green product adoption. Businesses should leverage advertising themes that resonate with customers' desire for social belonging and self-improvement. Highlighting the status-seeking aspect of green products can appeal to consumers' social values. At the same time, transparent communication about the environmental impact and production processes can help mitigate the impact of price sensitivity. Additionally, emphasizing knowledge values such as eco-labeling and providing detailed information about the origin and benefits of green products can reduce perceived risks among consumers.

Secondly, the findings suggest that marketing strategies should be customized according to the cultural context of the target market. In masculine societies like the United States, businesses might succeed more in emphasizing the conditional values of green products, such as their cost-effectiveness and practical benefits. On the other hand, in feminine societies like Finland, marketing efforts that focus on moral obligations and environmental harmony resonate more with consumers. Policymakers and businesses in price-sensitive markets should consider offering incentives and promotions to bolster the appeal of green products. These tailored strategies can effectively enhance the adoption of green products in different markets.

5.1 | Research limitations and future directions

The focus on only two countries, the United States and Finland, presents a limitation regarding the generalizability of the findings. Future research should include a more diverse range of countries to capture a broader understanding of how different cultural contexts influence green consumption behavior. This expansion would allow for a more comprehensive analysis of the connection between consumption values and green behavior across various global contexts.

The study's findings on the limited mediating role of social pressure in some contexts suggest a more intricate relationship between individual attitudes, social norms, and green behavior. Future research could examine how personal norms and attitudes interact with social pressure across different cultural landscapes. Additionally, the finding that social values like peer pressure do not significantly mediate environmental concerns in the United States indicates a need for further investigation into the nuances of social influence and green behavior

in various cultures. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights for businesses and policymakers in designing more effective and culturally sensitive green marketing strategies.

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