# THE IMPACT OF SELF-CONSCIOUS EMOTIONS ON WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

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*Abstract*

**Purpose:** This paper seeks to explore the effect of emotions on sustainable purchasing in Arab countries, mainly Qatar and Egypt.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The current investigation will empirically examine the effects of self-conscious emotions (private and public) on consumers' 'green' purchasing behavior and test whether these actions are mediated by the following emotions: empathy, pride, and guilt. An online self-report survey was employed to collect data from 234 students and faculty members who are affiliated with Qatar University (Qatar) and Tanta University (Egypt). A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to determine what factors directly and indirectly influence one's Willingness To Pay (WTP) for sustainable products.

**Findings:** The results showed that private self-consciousness was significantly related to feelings of pride, while public self-consciousness was more closely associated with empathy. Feelings of guilt and pride were more likely to encourage participants to pay greater for sustainable products and services.

**Originality/value:** The link between emotions and sustainable purchasing remains novel in Arab countries. Previous research has found that having ethical awareness toward sustainable purchasing does not amount to purchasing 'green' products. This will be the first study to explore the impact emotions can have on sustainable purchasing.

*Keywords: Empathy, Guilt, Pride, Self-conscious Emotions, Sustainability.*

## INTRODUCTION

Investigations concerning Psychology and Marketing have predominantly focused on an individualistic approach with regard to judgment processes and behavior (Nurhayati & Bangsawan, 2019, Hastie & Dawes, 2010; Koehler & Harvey, 2004). Over the last 40 years, researchers have been investigating the factors that determine sustainable consumptions for a significant period of time, (Prothero et al., 2011; Jackson, 2006). The in-depth body of literature regarding the motivations supporting consumers' willingness to accept sustainable consumption takes into account saving energy (Beca-Motes et al., 2013), reduced personal consumption (Shaw & Newholm, 2002), recycling (Thogersen, 1996), and ethical alternatives (Andorfer & Liebe, 2012). However, there are contributors towards greater ethical purchasing that have been neglected, such as emptions, attitudes and other psychological influences (Cai & Aguilar, 2013; Gallastegui, 2002). There is a growing trend towards a positive attitude for sustainable products and making ethical purchases, however, empirical evidence suggests that these attitudes do not necessarily impact actual consumer behavior (Gupta & Ogden, 2009; Pickett-Baker & Ozaki, 2008). Sustainable products are defined as goods that produce social, environmental, and economic benefits, while avoiding environmental or public health issues during its whole life cycle (e.g. from raw extraction to final disposal; Ljungberg, 2007).An online consumer survey across 60 countries found that 55% of consumers are willing to purchase goods and service that promote social and environmental sustainability, significantly higher than 50% in 2012 and 45% in 2011 (Nielsen, 2014). Yet, many investigations have found that having a higher sustainable attitude is a poor predictor of personal sustainable consumption (Ritchi, Mcdougall & Claxton, 1981; Verhallen & Van Raaij, 1981). In order to gain a clearer understanding of the actual purchasing behavior of sustainable products/services, it is important to consider other variables that have not been previously taken into account. Specifically, there is a lack of research based on self-perception factors regarding why consumers engage in environmental purchasing from an emotional perspective.

Drawing upon the Reciprocal Determinism Theory (Bandura, 1986), which states that the acquisition of behaviors are controlled by cognitive processes, this present investigation examines the influence of self-conscious emotions (e.g., public and private self-conscious emotions) on buying green products mediated by three vital components of the theory, namely, pride, guilt, and empathy. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of this investigation. The present study

will enrich and contribute to sustainability literature by studying the effect of self-conscious emotions on customers' intentions to purchase sustainable products. Furthermore, this investigation will provide much needed data regarding Arab nations and how self-conscious emotions affect their WTP for sustainable products. In this context, WTP is defined as the maximum price that a customer is willing to pay for a product. Specifically, using samples from Qatar and Egypt, this investigation provides a means to promote sustainable consumption in a region that has a higher than average pollution and waste rate.

**The Middle-East and Sustainable Consumption**

Muhammad, Fathelrahman, and Tasbih Ullah (2016) reviewed the awareness of negative externalities caused by conventional methods of farming and its impact on the environment. The study was based on 300 participants who reside in the UAE, and it revealed that factors, such as gender, nationality, and education have an impact on the awareness of the positive effects of organic food, which played a role in their purchase intention. Males from the UAE are more educated and demonstrated the strongest correlation in purchasing organic food. A prior investigation conducted by Muhammed et al. (2015) analyzed the factors that impact consumers' WTP for higher prices for organic goods in the UAE. The data was collected from a total of 300 subjects and it was found that respondents gave a positive feedback that they would be willing to pay more for organic products, and this was determined by demographic factors (education, nationality, age, household size, and income). The researchers concluded that residents in the UAE are aware of the impact of conventional farming on the environment and human friendly alternatives of organic farming.

Almossawi (2014) conducted a research that aimed at promoting ethical purchasing behavior and analyzed the determinants responsible for the Bahraini youth to make such purchases. A self-report was given to 243 undergraduate students aged between 19 and 23 years, which examined attitudes, environmental knowledge, and concerns regarding increasing green purchase behavior, all of which were found to be significantly associated with green purchasing. These findings are supported by a previous study conducted by Mostafa (2006) in Egypt. Using a sample of 1093 subjects in a consumer survey, it was also shown that consumers' ecological knowledge, attitude, and concern were influential in purchasing environment friendly products, along with perceived effectiveness. They further found that skepticism was an important negative influence on consumers' intention to buy green products. In addition, Mostafa (2007) discovered gender differences in green purchasing behavior in another Egyptian sample. Men showed greater concern and knowledge about sustainability when compared to women. However, it was not tested whether these beliefs translated into greater green purchasing behavior.

In Iran, Mohamadian and Khataei (2011) investigated the psychological and social factors on green purchasing in a sample of middle-aged men and women. The factors that increased green purchasing were ecological attitudes, social norms, personal norms, and perceived effectiveness. In another Iranian based study (Nejati, Salamzadeh & Salamzadeh, 2011), subjective norms (i.e., perceived social pressure from others) had the greatest influence on individuals purchasing green products, while attitudes toward the environment did not have a significant effect. Contrary to Nejati et al. (2011), a later study by Bagher, Salati and Ghaffari (2018) found attitudes towards organic food increased green purchasing, as well as ethical orientation, subjective norms, health awareness and perceived behavioral control.

These studies support the need for green marketing as a means to promote modern environmental challenges. Green marketing is predominantly based on the idea of providing consumers and business partners with higher added value, while concurrently meeting long-term social and environmental needs. In petroleum-rich Arab nations, it is clear that there is a growing number of questions regarding the ethical responsibility in terms of marketing practices and it is clear that there are greater attempts to incorporate the principles of environmental responsibility in their marketing activities, but some researchers question whether this is enough (Korichi, Abdelmadjid & Sasu, 2017).

**Self-Conscious Emotions**

Self-consciousness can be defined as the ability of an individual to perceive his/her own self within social settings and have a critical awareness of other people's views about them (Fenigstein, Scheier & Buss, 1975). Using this definition, it is possible to categorize the self into two subtypes, the public self and the private self (Buss, 1980). When referring to the private self-consciousness, this unseen facet makes up the self and therefore is not normally or easily detected by those around us (e.g., drives or emotions) (Buss, 1980; Marquis & Filiatrault, 2002). The private self-consciousness is linked to personal emotions, beliefs, and conceptions and is dependent on excluding considerations that involve others (Iyer & Muncy, 2009).

In contrast to private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness involves the consideration of others' views towards the self (Iyer & Muncy, 2009). Public self-consciousness is focused around what individual display publicly and is easily detectably by others and is connected to their own impression management (Cheek & Briggs, 1982). It is argued that an individual with high public self-consciousness has an inner fear of rejection by others (Bushman, 1993). Therefore, public self-consciousness places greater importance on societal concerns, and less focus on self-concerns.

Applying private and public self-consciousness within a retain environment, specifically sustainable products, needs to consider the fact that these items tend to be more costly than their non-ethical counterparts. Arguably, private self-consciousness can be stimulated in this situation as the more significant price is likely to play on one's moral value to pay more for sustainable consumption. Yet, in situations such as these, people are likely to use their public self-consciousness as they may wish to comply with social norms.

The current consensus in this field of research is that the self-consciousness is reliably associated with one's emotions, which are stimulated by self-reflection and self-evaluation (Tangney, Stuewig & Mashek, 2007). Ethical behaviors can be affected by an individual's emotion (Eisenberg, 2000; Hardy, 2006). Buying ethical products is viewed as a form of moral and ethical action (Verain, Bartels, Dagevos, Sijtsema, Onwezen & Antonides, 2012; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Situational factors can also have a mediating effect on the link between self-consciousness and self-conscious emotions. Different situations can yield various appraisals that either activate or inactivate public or private self-consciousness.

**Ego-Focused and Other-Focused Emotions**

An individual's self-conscious emotions (e.g., guilt, shame, and pride) are motivated by feelings, opinions, and behaviors (Fischer & Tangney, 1995). These emotions can encourage the level at which people work to achieve tasks (Stipek, 1995) as well as socially correct behavior during social interactions (Baumeister, Stillwell & Heatherton, 1994; Leith & Baumeister, 1998). Studies have shown that there is an association between altruistic outcomes and self-conscious emotions. For example, guilt is known for its involvement in pro social behaviors (e.g. compassion), (Fischer & Tangney, 1995; Baumeister et al., 1994).

Additionally, researchers support the notion there are two identified forms of emotions, consisting of ego-focused (pride) and other-focused emotions (guilt and empathy), (Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006; Aaker & Williams, 1998). These types of emotions are distinguishable by the way a person generates his or her emotions from interdependent self-verses independent self (Kitayama et al., 2006). This distinction exemplifies emotional responses in line with fundamental modules of communion and human experience-agency (Paulhus & John, 1998). The human experience-agency focuses on exhibiting competence and strives to pursue personal goals and accomplishments. Communion includes features of maintaining social connections (Ybarra, Chan, Park, Burnstein, Monin & Stanik, 2008; Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002). Furthermore, ego-focused emotions are considered as disengaging emotions, and other-focused emotions are engaging emotions (Aaker & Williams, 1998; Kitayama et al., 2006). Therefore, ego-focused emotions go beyond a person's internal state or personal behaviors as it has a need for expression, experiences, and awareness within an individual sphere (Aaker & Williams, 1998). Other-focused emotions are linked to social (or others) context, this includes a person's desire for agreement and alignment of a person's actions with that of others (Aaker & Williams, 1998).

**Pride, Guilt, Shame, and Empathy**

Self-conscious emotions are important to motivate and encourage people's feelings and behaviors (Fischer & Tangney, 1995). Self-conscious emotions, such as pride, guilt, and empathy motivate individuals to be more willingly involved in social interactions (Leith & Baumester, 1998). Research has suggested that these three emotions share similarities and differences with regard to how they strengthen or inhibit consumers' WTP for sustainable products.

Feelings of pride center on independent feelings produced by internal features and uniqueness (Aaker & Williams, 1998). When applying pride to consumers, there are emotions that are likely to be in harmony with self-interests, as morality underpins sustainable purchases, which can promote self-actualization or self-achievement. In general terms, other-focused emotions and ego-focused emotions can be linked with morality, and part of the self-conscious emotions, which requires further investigation to improve the currently understood aspects in the psychological process that maintain green choices by using the theory of planned behavior. Feelings of pride can lead to pro social actions, as consumers view themselves as the cause of relevant sustainable outcomes. Feelings of pride have been associated with charitable donations and volunteering (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007). As a result, advertisers use cause-related type marketing campaigns to promote sustainable consumption (Kim & Johnson, 2013). Furthermore, feelings of pride have been found

to be associated with a desire to engage in future sustainable consumption among consumers' (Gregory-Smith, Smith, & Winklhofer, 2013; Williams & DeSteno, 2008; Higgins, Friedman, Harlow, Idson, Ayduk, & Taylor, 2001).

Further, consumers can develop feelings of guilt if there is a sense of direct cause of negative outcomes. One example would be purchasing an unethically produced product (Lindenmeier et al., 2012; Soscia, 2007). Guilt also occurs when individuals feel that they are not meeting the preset standards or goals (Gilbert, 2003; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Baumeister et al., 1995). In response to guilt, there is a desire to cope by repairing the situation that is causing stress (Skinner & Brewer, 2002). Therefore, in order to resolve this, individuals may engage in pro-social behaviors, such as purchasing green products. Guilt promotes ethical choices with regard to consumer choices (Steenhaut & Van Kenhove, 2005). This emotion's connection to 'green' behavior extends to food consumption (Mohr, Lichtenstein & Janiszewski, 2012; Mishra & Mishra 2011).

Lastly, empathy could be related to sustainable consumption, as this feeling involves caring for others' opinions and thoughts (McGinley & Carlo, 2007). Research has shown that there is an association between high levels of empathy and assisting others (Batson, Batson, Todd, Brummett, Shaw & Aldeguer, 1995; Krebs, 1975). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence that has explored empathy as a contributor towards consumers to purchase sustainable products.

**Thinking and Acting**

There is a clear gap between consumers' thinking and explicit actions. Researchers have referred to this rift as the 'attitude-behavior gap' (Tanner & WölfingKast, 2003; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Attitude alone is not necessarily an ideal predictor for consumers' green products choices. Despite the fact that previous investigations have focused mainly on consumers' consumption patterns and non-consumption behavior (Lee, 2010; Nittala, 2014), Further research is required to address whether people's thoughts about sustainability can affect their ability to purchase sustainable products.

Researchers are now drawing greater focus on the role of emotion and cognitive aspects. The variable of emotion with regard to marketing has been explained by two predominant theories. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) created the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and Ajzen (1985) later produced the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Very few investigations applied the hierarchical values – beliefs, attitudes, and behavior models. TRA states that a person's actions are motivated by two key factors, namely, social norms and individual attitudes. According to TPB, an additional determinant of an individual's behavior is perceived behavioral control (PBC). For example, PBC is one's perceived control over their purchasing choices. Research has adopted TPB to examine consumers' actual buying behavior, attitude, and intentions with many products, including 'green' goods (Tanner & WölfingKast, 2003; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

Previously, TPB was not considered a suitable model to explain ethics and behavior in research, which is an important element when considering ethical consumer choices. In addition, TPB did not consider habitual buying behavior, which is when a consumer has low involvement in a purchase and perceives few significant differences between brands (Padel & Foster, 2005). Previous research has not shown whether situational factors (e.g., eco labeling and media exposure) act as confounding variables between environmental attitudes and behavior (Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates, 2010). Therefore, one can suggest that the TPB has failed with regard to explaining consumers' decision making while shopping, as well as 'post-purchase behavior' (e.g., whether consumers would buy a product in the future). However, it is still important to state that the TPB model does examine the antecedents of pre-purchasing intentions.

Phipps et al. (2013) suggested new means of explaining consumers' behavior of sustainable products by providing a new model that focuses on reciprocal determinism, which includes the aspects of social cognitive theory (SCT). This model considers consumers' behavior in terms of the key-determining variable in purchasing and the end product. Personal factors associated with a specific consumer are determined by present sociocultural environments and sustainable behavior now and in the future. This model presents a new dimension and perception of predicting consumers' behavioral variables.

Currently, there has been only one investigation conducted by Lee (2014) that used the reciprocal determinism theory to determine sustainable behavior consumption using a Qatari sample. As of now, there have not been any prior studies that have applied the reciprocal determinism theory to explore Qatari consumers' WTP for sustainable products. The authors of this current research support the utilization of this relatively new and scarcely employed approach. Further findings can be produced to enrich and provide deeper insights into predicting consumers' sustainable purchase behavior in Qatar. Additionally, in a country with high pollution - the largest per capita (Lanouar; Al-Malk; Al Karbi, 2016) - it is essential to understand the delay in the Qatari population apprehension to increase their WTP for sustainable products, while also

considering personal and socio-contextual factors. Figure 1 (below) illustrates the research model that guides this research and investigates the effect of self-conscious emotions on customers' intentions to purchase sustainable products. The key issue in this investigation is that despite an economically strong development in high GDP per capita in Gulf countries, there appears to be a lack of adoption in terms of sustainable products. There is a need across the world for all countries to meet certain $CO_2$ emissions and there needs to be more use of sustainable goods to meet environmental needs. As Figure 1 shows, the important variables of this research include self-conscious emotions (public and private) as the independent variable, pride, guilt, and empathy as mediator variables, and intentions to purchase sustainable products as the dependent variable.



Figure 1. Research model

The research model proposes that self-conscious emotions (public and private) have positive effects on customers' intentions to purchase sustainable products when mediated by pride, guilt, and empathy. In order to examine the direct and indirect effects of self-conscious emotions on customers' intentions to purchase sustainable products and the mediating effect on these of pride, guilt, and empathy, the current study develops and tests a mediation model, as shown in Figure 1.

**Table 1:** The conceptual framework of the current investigation is hypothesized below

| No. | Hypothesis |
|-----|------------|
| 1 | Private self-consciousness is positively associated with pride. |
| 2 | Private self-consciousness is positively associated with empathy. |
| 3 | Private self-consciousness is positively associated with guilt. |
| 4 | Public self-consciousness is positively associated with pride. |
| 5 | Public self-consciousness is positively associated with empathy. |
| 6 | Public self-consciousness is positively associated with guilt. |
| 7 | Pride is positively associated with willingness to pay for sustainable products. |
| 8 | Empathy is positively associated with willingness to pay for sustainable products. |
| 9 | Guilt is positively associated with willingness to pay for sustainable products. |
| 10 | Private self-consciousness has a stronger effect than public self-consciousness on willingness to pay for sustainable products in the shopping scenarios. |

**RESEARCH METHODS**

The sample in this study consisted of individuals affiliated with Qatar University and Tanta University (Egypt) as either students or faculty members. The study sample was diverse and open to all ages, gender, nationality, relationship status, educational level, annual income, number of family members, years of study, or major academic achievements. Convenient sampling was used as students and employees at Qatar University and Tanta University were approached in person on campus. Data was collected over a six-week period during the academic year 2017/2018. The total sample consisted of 234 (56 males (23.9%) and 177 females (75.6%) subjects. The age of participants ranged from 20 to 46 years (M = 24). Table 2 details the demographic information of the sample.

**Table 2:** Participant Demographic Details

| Variable | Category | N | Response (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 56 | 23.9 |
| | Female | 177 | 75.6 |
| Age | Less than 20 | 29 | 12.4 |
| | 20-24 | 103 | 44.0 |
| | 25-29 | 35 | 15.0 |
| | 30-34 | 25 | 10.7 |
| | 35 and more | 42 | 17.9 |
| Race | Gulf Arabian | 163 | 69.7 |
| | North African Arabian | 64 | 27.3 |
| | American | 7 | 3 |
| | East Asian | 0 | 0 |
| Relationship Status | Single | 128 | 54.7 |
| | Married | 96 | 41.0 |
| | Divorced | 10 | 4.3 |
| | Widow | 0 | 0 |
| Education level | High School | 53 | 22.6 |
| | Bachelor | 128 | 54.7 |
| | Vocational Ed | 19 | 8.1 |
| | Higher Diploma | 4 | 1.7 |
| | Master | 7 | 3.0 |
| | PhD | 23 | 9.8 |
| Annual Income | Less than 50.000 QR | 75 | 32.1 |
| | 50.000 to 75.000 QR | 60 | 25.6 |
| | 75.000 to 100.000 QR | 25 | 10.7 |
| | 100.000 to 150.000 QR | 47 | 20.1 |
| | More than 150.000 QR | 27 | 11.5 |
| Family Members | 1 to 5 Members | 68 | 29.1 |
| | 6 to 9 Members | 115 | 49.1 |
| | More than 10 | 51 | 21.8 |
| Academic Specialization | Science (Eng., Applied Science, Math) | 8 | 3.4 |
| | Social sciences and Humanities | 208 | 88.9 |
| | Fine Arts and Media | 16 | 6.8 |
| | Medical Education | 2 | .9 |

**Instruments**

The researchers designed a four-part assessment consisting of 20-items to assess the dependent variables (see details below), as well as items regarding demographic information. The questionnaire measured sustainable consumption and self-conscious emotions, such as empathy, guilt, and pride. Using Google forms, this assessment was distributed online by using a link sent to the emails of undergraduate, graduate, and faculty members from Qatar University and Tanta University, Egypt. The item list used to measure self-conscious emotions was adopted from the study of Kim and Johnson (2013) regarding the measure of ego-focused and other-focused emotions.

The dependent variable related to shopping behavior was measured using a shopping scenario to examine the extent to which subjects were prepared to pay an extra 15% of the original price for an ethically sourced t-shirt. This measurement is a proxy of sustainable consumption behavior. Participants were assessed by asking them to imagine the following shopping scenario:

> "Picture that you are in a large mall where there are a number of clothing stores. These fashion retailers offer a number of items, such as accessories, clothing, and sportswear. As you are shopping, you see a t-shirt that you are interested in buying. The label on t-shirt states that an added 15% of the original price will go towards the International Committee of the Red Cross to help Syrian refugees who have suffered from violence."

Participants were asked to indicate how strongly they experienced each emotion when presented with this scenario. All the measures of the variables regarding the shopping scenario were measured using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

**Validity**

By using validity analysis, data can be drawn regarding the degree to which self-conscious emotions theoretical constructs capture the key emotions as intended. Self-conscious emotions factor analyses will cluster together emotions that are similar. In order to do this, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) by using varimax rotation procedures and components analysis. This determined whether the structure of the data reflected the expected structure, based on studies that have been previously validated. According to the CFA, there are six factors as shown in Figure 2.
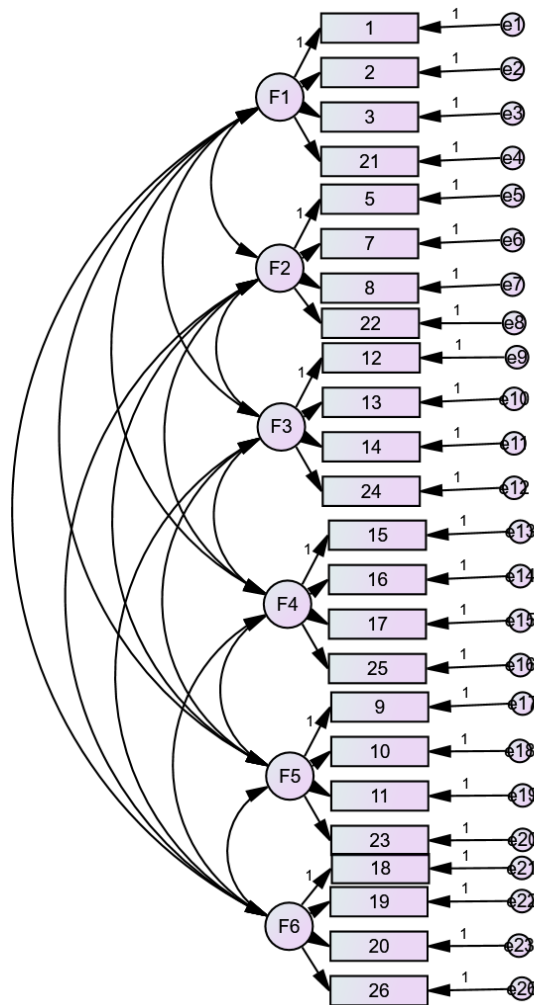


Figure 2. Confirmatory factor Analysis Model

A screen plot would help ascertain the eigenvalues in a descending order and connect the components. The screen plot (Figure 3) indicated an "elbow" continuing through factor six and seven and then smoothing or showing that each additional factor beyond that accounts for less significant proportions of the total variance (Ledesma & Vlero-Mora, 2007). Therefore, the scree plot would suggest that there are approximately six to seven factors.

There are certain empirical criteria that must be met to determine which correlated factors should be retained in a self-report or instrument. This criterion includes eigenvalues, which are the variations of each factor (or component) that account for variance in the instrument used. Other criteria include Kaiser criterion, variance explained, and screen plot (Cortina, 2002). A Kaiser criterion score (K1 = .811) suggests to include the eigenvalues that are greater than one. The eigenvalues indicate that there are five factors that have a score greater and thus meet the minimal variance explained threshold. Another indicator that can be used is to assess whether the factor explains at least 15% of the variance, the same five factors account for at least 15% of the variance and cumulatively explain 67.34% of the total variance. Therefore, based on the empirical criteria, the reports used in this investigation will use a five-factor approach. The constructs include private self-conscious, public self-conscious, empathy, pride, guilt, and willingness to pay for sustainable products.
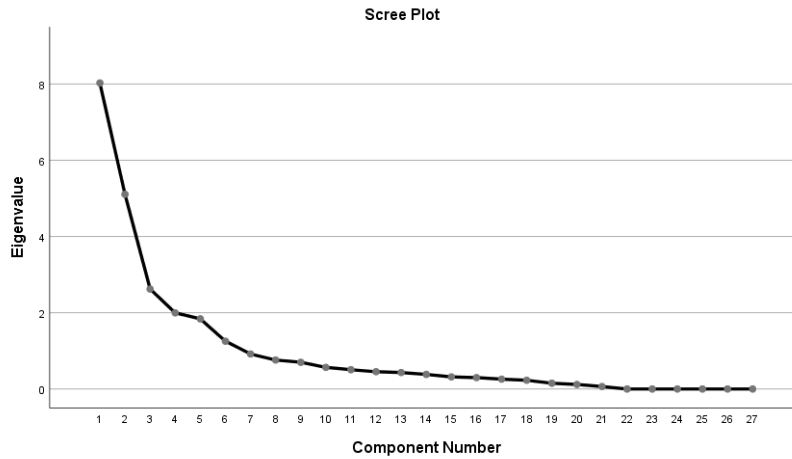
Figure 3. Scree Plot Detailing the Number of Components and Eigenvalues in Descending Order

**Reliability**

The internal reliability testing for self-conscious emotions assessment supports that the self-report is generalizable, and findings can thus be applied to populations with similar characteristics. Reliability can be assessed using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient analysis. The questionnaire scored between 0.83 and 0.95 for the self-conscious emotions assessment. Researchers agree that the closer the Cronbach's alpha coefficient score is to 1.00, the higher the overall internal consistency, however, a score of 0.70 is considered the minimum (George & Mallery, 2003). All six alpha coefficients are high and above the minimum score of 0.70 confirming internal consistency of the self-conscious emotions' assessment constructs.

**RESULTS**

Researchers conducted a path analysis to examine the research hypotheses and the results are presented in Figure 3. The regression weights for the findings are detailed in Table 3.
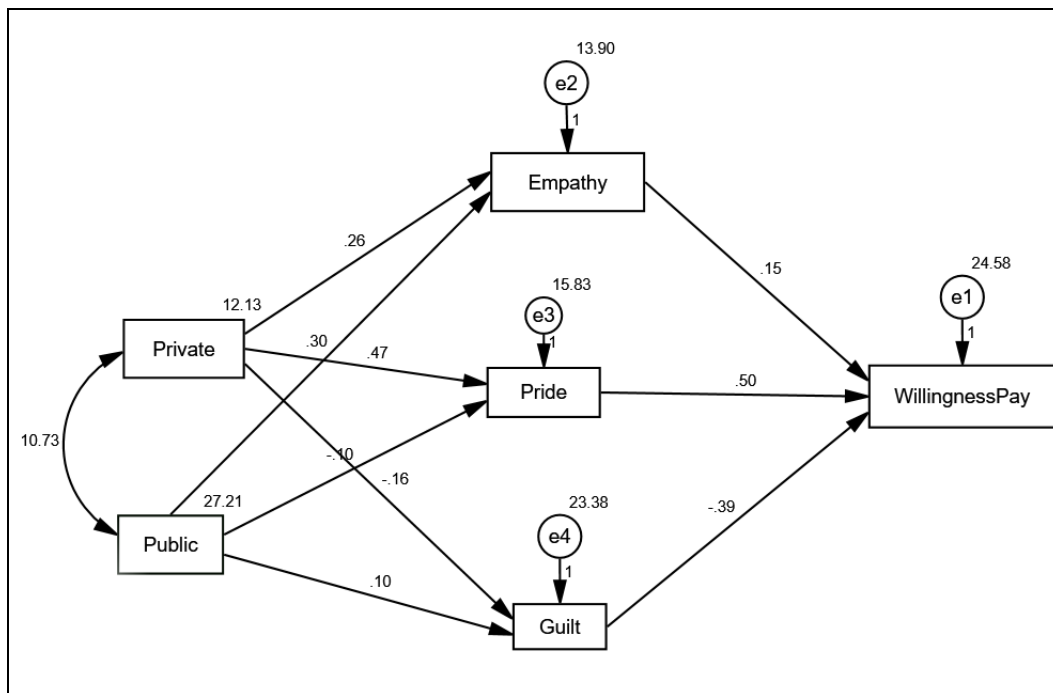


Figure 4. Results of Path Analysis

**Table 3:** Regression Scores and Level of Significance for Each of the Components Tested

| Component | | Private or public | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | Label |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pride | <--- | Private | .472 | .093 | 5.090*** | par_1 |
| Guilt | <--- | Public | .104 | .075 | 1.377 | par_2 |

| Component | | Private or public | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | Label |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Empathy | <--- | Private | .262 | .087 | 3.016*** | par_3 |
| Pride | <--- | Public | -.095 | .062 | -1.537 | par_7 |
| Guilt | <--- | Private | -.160 | .113 | -1.420 | par_8 |
| Empathy | <--- | Public | .300 | .058 | 5.161*** | par_9 |
| Willingness to pay | <--- | Empathy | .152 | .075 | 2.023*** | par_4 |
| Willingness to pay | <--- | Pride | .505 | .077 | 6.516*** | par_5 |
| Willingness to pay | <--- | Guilt | -.387 | .067 | -5.794*** | par_6 |

Note. *** p< .001

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 suggested that there will be an association between private self-consciousness and pride, and empathy and guilt. Private self-consciousness was positively associated positively with pride (β= .472, t-value= .093, p < 0.05) and private self-consciousness was positively associated positively with empathy (β= .262, t-value= .087, p < 0.05). While public self-consciousness was positively associated with empathy (β= .300, t-value= .058, p < 0.05), however, not pride (β = -.095, t-value= .062, p = .124). Therefore, private self-consciousness is significantly associated with pride and empathy. Furthermore, the relationship between private self-consciousness and guilt indicated a non-significant relationship, and the relationship between public self-consciousness and pride indicated a non-significant negative relationship. Whereas pride was positively associated with willingness to pay on sustainable products (β= .505, t-value= .077, p < 0.05), guilt was negatively associated with willingness to pay for sustainable products (β=-.387, t-value= .067, P < 0.05). Moreover, empathy was positively associated with willingness to pay for sustainable products (β=.152, t-value= .075, p < 0.05). Therefore, hypothesis 7, 8, and 9 were also supported and we rejected the null hypothesis. Results indicated that pride and guilt had a significant influence on willingness to pay for more sustainable products, but pride did not. Hypothesis 10 was also supported, which compared the strength of the relationship between two types of public and private self-consciousness emotions. By summing up the absolute values of standardized total effects from private/public self-consciousness to three types of self-conscious emotions, the results indicated that private self-consciousness had a stronger total effect than public self-consciousness (TE private = 0.787 > TE public = 0.167).

**DISCUSSION**

**Table 4:** Summary of Hypotheses Examination in the Model

| No. | Hypothesis | Shopping environment model |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Private self-consciousness is positively associated with pride. | Supported |
| 2 | Private self-consciousness is positively associated with empathy. | Supported |
| 3 | Private self-consciousness is positively associated with guilt. | Not supported |
| 4 | Public self-consciousness is positively associated with pride. | Not supported |
| 5 | Public self-consciousness is positively associated with empathy. | Supported |
| 6 | Public self-consciousness is positively associated with guilt. | Not supported |
| 7 | Pride is positively associated with willingness to pay for sustainable products. | Supported |
| 8 | Empathy is positively associated with willingness to pay for sustainable products. | Supported |
| 9 | Guilt is positively associated with willingness to pay for sustainable products. | Supported |
| 10. | Private self-consciousness has a stronger effect than public self-consciousness on willingness to pay for sustainable products in the shopping scenarios. | Supported |

The current findings highlight the impact of self-conscious emotions on sustainable consumption for the first time in a Middle-Eastern context. Emotions contribute significantly towards whether an individual is more willing or less willing to purchase sustainable goods. From the findings of this investigation, pride and empathy associated positively with sustainable consumption. Meanwhile, guilt played no significant role in whether an individual purchased 'green' products. Referring to the Cognitive-Emotions-Behavior Model (Weiner, 1980), empathy and pride are considered positive emotions, and thus increase helping behaviors. Based on this theory, an individual who is empathetic is more likely to engage in pro-social behavior, such as sustainable consumption, while negative emotions (such as guilt) can result in the avoidance of moral or ethical actions. This may explain why guilt was found to have no significance on sustainable consumption.

However, it is important to note that other-focused emotions, such as empathy, are not only driven by public self-consciousness. It is clear that private self-consciousness can also lead to higher agreeableness towards sustainable consumption and engaging in sustainable consumption behaviors. Therefore, private and public self-consciousness that lead to self-conscious emotions cooperate together between the needs for environmental conservation (i.e., social-identity

salience) and personal needs (i.e., personal-identity salience) in order to prevent unethical or polluting products (Nurhayati & Bangsawan, 2019, Black & Cherrier, 2010).

On the other hand, the shopping environment model indicates that empathy and pride are the self-conscious emotion elements that significantly motivate sustainable consumption. While guilt has no significant influence on private and public self-consciousness emotion, it has a positive effect on sustainable consumption. Therefore, the individual appraisal on sustainable consumption varies in different scenarios or situations. People are more likely to be considerate when they are engaging in intentional shopping (e.g., purchasing something for themselves). Accordingly, sustainable consumption is enhanced by the activation of self-consciousness (Peloza, White & Shang, 2013).

With regard to how the findings from this investigation compare to other research from the Middle-East, this paper based in Qatar was unique and is therefore incomparable with previous investigations that have found demographic features to be key components in an individual's purchase of 'green' products (Muhammad, Fathelrahman, & Tasbih Ullah,2016; Muhammad, Fathelrahman, & Tasbih Ullah 2015). Other studies have also highlighted the importance of attitude, environmental knowledge, and individual concern for ethical purchasing (Mostafa, 2006; Almossawi, 2014). This investigation supports previous studies that have found that self-conscious emotions influence a willingness to pay for more expensive, but ethically sourced goods and services. Furthermore, such data can be utilized by various areas in marketing and policy making to promote ethical purchasing, which is a relatively new trend in the Middle East.

The findings from this current investigation contribute to the much-needed information regarding self-conscious emotions and its role with sustainable consumption. Previous literature has placed more importance on cognitive variables on the basis of the theory of planed behavior and behavioral change. However, emotional factors play an equally, if not more, significant impact on ethical purchasing. Weiner (1980) proposes that based on the Cognitive-Emotions-Behavior Model, positive emotions can promote helping behaviors. On the other hand, negative emotions can lead to individuals avoiding to aid others. Using this logic, one may assume that a positive emotion, such as empathy facilitates pro-social behaviors, including sustainable consumptions. Guilt (negative emotion), on the other hand, can lead to avoidant behaviors and not partaking in helping behaviors, and thus avoid sustainable consumption. However, taking into consideration the shopping environment model, this investigation supports a congruent outcome with the general evaluation model. This would support empathy as the only private self-conscious emotion that promotes sustainable consumption in people. Therefore, the other self-conscious emotions (i.e., guilt and pride) have no effect on influencing sustainable consumption. However, it is important to state that emotions are dependent on situational factors and therefore, other self-conscious emotions may become more or less effective in persuading sustainable consumption, based on situational circumstances (Brandstatter, 1991).

Furthermore, the finding from the Qatari sample indicates that individuals are more likely to base their sustainable consumption intentions on public self-conscious emotions. Therefore, this study suggests that people focus more on themselves when they are intentionally shopping, and care less about social pressures. As a result, the activation of private self-conscious emotions is a key factor to encourage sustainable consumption. However, counter-evidence has also supported self-accountability, which has been empirically reported to significantly impact product preference, specifically when there are ethical attributes to be considered (Peloza et al., 2013).

**Implications**

The results from this investigation are imperative to the current promotional strategies that are used in the Middle East to support sustainable consumption. This investing provides further details regarding the attitude-behavior gap when dealing with the actual purchasing of ethical products. Based on the current findings, it can be argued that self-conscious emotions are not important when concerning others in a shopping environment. This reflects self-relevance (Johnson, Matear & Thomson, 2011) and as well as self-defense (Less, Cherrier & Belk, 2013). Therefore, the implications of this study suggest that sustainable consumption is not strictly confined to appearances and what others may think. Interestingly, the insignificance of public self-conscious emotions in a shopping environment may explain why there is a low purchase rate but high interest in 'green' products. More specifically, many promotional campaigns for sustainable consumption focus on public self-consciousness. Perhaps greater focus should be invested into private self-consciousness to motivate customers to engage in purchasing sustainable products. This would, as a result, provide a solution in promoting the purchase of 'green' products in the Middle-Eastern region.

From a business perspective, this investigation supports the idea that marketers need to reconsider their approach when marketing sustainable goods or any events that are associated with sustainability in terms of self-conscious emotions. Advertisers can integrate an empathic approach as part of their marketing strategy in order to promote sustainable

products. More importantly, this empathetic approach should be taken into consideration with private self-consciousness. It is recommended that experimental marketing be adopted as this enables consumers to be more closely involved as they will use the products first-hand, making the experience more personal. For example, Schmitt (1999) found that experimental marketing is relevant to sensory-emotive and rational consumption motivations. By engaging with the products directly, the consumers are more likely to understand the ethical value of sustainability, as self-benefit consideration is activated.

From a communication perspective, this investigation provides marketers with another means of communicating effectively with their target audiences, which in this case are individuals who need convincing to purchase sustainable products in Qatar. Public benefit, which can include helping the vulnerable, environmental protection, charity, among others, is useful for marketers to draw upon when communicating their message. Arguably, this method of communication is not always ideal when convincing consumers to actually buy sustainable products. Based on the finding that private self-conscious emotions influence participants' willingness to purchase sustainable products in a retail environment, communication should center on self-benefit. This can include an emphasis in values of personal health and wellbeing underlined by sustainable consumption. Policymakers can also use similar strategies when advocating for sustainable behavior. For example, encourage recycling bottles to increase household saving. By doing so, individuals' private self-consciousness can be activated by these personal benefits.

## LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations in this current investigation. One limitation is the focus on self-conscious emotions as the key effects driving sustainable consumption behavior. Future research should consider whether other cognitive factors also drive self-conscious emotions. Secondly, this investigation is limited by the fact that it uses a survey method to understand the complex effects of self-conscious emotions on sustainable consumption problems. In order to further understand this field, experimental research designs should also be employed to see if similar results are still observed, with the additional manipulation of emotional appeals of sustainable products. Therefore, more elaborate and rich findings can be extracted from such studies, such as exploring personal distress and how these affect feelings of pride in a shopping environment. Finally, this investigation has also considered sustainable consumption from a general perspective; therefore, it is unclear of similar findings observed with specific brands.

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