

The impact of westernisation on the purchase intention of cruelty-free products: a study based on the Sri Lankan cosmetic market

Purchase
intention of
cruelty-free
products

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Abstract

Purpose – A surge in demand for ethical products, including cruelty-free products, has been well documented in recent years, with direct ramifications for businesses. This trend towards ethical consumption seemed to be swiftly replicated in Eastern countries, especially in South Asian nations, as a result of westernisation. Based on the theory of planned behaviour and the concept of the attitude-behaviour gap, this study aims to investigate the impact of westernisation on the purchase intention of cruelty-free cosmetic products.

Design/methodology/approach – A positivist research paradigm was utilised in this study. Accordingly, an online self-administered questionnaire was shared among 242 consumers of cosmetic products in Sri Lanka in order to collect responses. The statistical techniques of correlation analysis, the Sobel test and moderator regression analysis have been utilised in this study.

Findings – It was found that there seems to be a positive impact of westernisation and the cruelty-free purchase intention of consumers. Moreover, consumer empowerment appears to mediate this relationship, while the attitude behaviour gap tends to further impact the relationship between consumer empowerment and the purchase intention of cruelty-free products.

Originality/value – This study seems to shed light upon the impact of westernisation on the purchase intention of consumers, especially from an ethical dimension and this study is likely to extend existing studies which have focussed on consumer empowerment, attitude-behaviour gap as well as the theory of planned behaviour, especially in the context of South Asia, where there seems to be a dearth of such investigations. Moreover, this study has attempted to contextualise the construct of “Westernisation” to the South Asian region in line with the tone set by an editorial article Dewasiri *et al.* (2021).

Keywords Purchase intention, Cruelty-free products purchase intention, Ethical purchasing, Westernisation, Consumer empowerment, Attitude-behaviour gap

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Background of the study

In a world where people are becoming more involved in the causes they care about, ethical purchasing is gaining traction and cruelty-free products are no exception (Cadete, 2021). The

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phrase “cruelty-free” is used to denote business avoiding testing its products on animals (Sheehan and Lee, 2014). Further, it suggests that animals should not be used or owned by people in any way. However, the awareness of consumers about cruelty-free products and animal testing is different across countries and social groups (Krivosheeva, 2021).

This difference is specifically visible between developed countries in the West and developing countries attributed to differing legislation on animal testing, as well as greater consumer empowerment and resultant consumer awareness about sustainable consumption among consumers from developed countries. But, with the process of westernisation, it can be observed that the purchase intentions of consumers in eastern countries are also driven by inquisitiveness over their consumption choices (Attanayake, 2003). Moreover, it is observed that there is an attitude-behaviour gap (ABG) between consumers’ concerns towards the environment and their actual buying behaviour that influences the market share for cruelty-free products (Krivosheeva, 2021).

The pursuit of beauty often has a high cost. Thousands of animals are poisoned and killed every year through cruel tests devised since the 1920s to assess the toxicity of cosmetic products and their contents (Wijesiri, 2020). Cosmetics are simply products designed to be applied to the human body for the purposes of cleansing, beautifying, enhancing attractiveness or changing appearance. Hence, testing on animals to ascertain whether cosmetic products are in good condition for human use is widely observed in the cosmetic industry. Research shows that greater consumer attention to ethical issues is also present in the cosmetic industry, with customers increasingly favouring cosmetic companies that implement ethical business methods (Douglas, 2019).

Sri Lanka being a South Asian nation has experienced a change in consumer lifestyle, which seems to have changed in consumer culture positioning (Dewasiri *et al.*, 2021). Recently, with westernisation and worldwide cultural integration, it appears that Sri Lankan consumers are also getting accustomed to western consumer practices. The cruelty-free concept originated in the West and European countries, New Zealand and the United States of America have been taking steps to ban animal testing in cosmetics (Wijesiri, 2020).

As the global movement picks up to ban cosmetic testing on animals, the number of cruelty-free cosmetic brands in Sri Lanka has also grown in the past years. However, the majority of the cosmetic brands presented in the Sri Lankan market continue testing on animals. Currently, the rise of specific blogs dedicated to the topic of cruelty-free can be observed in various internet resources and social media, which makes the information search phase easier for the consumer (Sant, 2020). Therefore, this study involves a thorough analysis of the possible impact of westernisation on consumer empowerment and the ensuing purchase intention towards cruelty-free cosmetic products by Sri Lankan consumers while taking into account the ABG of consumers. This would be an interesting context given that most similar studies (e.g. George, 2004; Krivosheeva, 2021) seem to have considered developed economies such as the U.K., Australia as well as New Zealand.

Therefore, this paper seeks answers as to what extent westernisation has impacted the purchase intention of cruelty-free products in the context of the Sri Lankan cosmetic market.

Accordingly, this would lead to the following research questions,

- RQ1. How does the westernisation influence consumer inclination to purchase cruelty-free cosmetic products?
- RQ2. How does the mediating effect of consumer empowerment influence the relationship between westernisation and the purchase intention of cruelty-free cosmetic products?
- RQ3. How does the moderating effect of the ABG influence the relationship between consumer empowerment and purchase intention of cruelty-free cosmetic products?

The research aims to achieve the following objectives

- (1) Identify the impact of westernisation on the purchase intention of cruelty-free cosmetic products.
- (2) Evaluate the mediating effect of consumer empowerment on the relationship between westernisation and purchase intention of cruelty-free cosmetic products.
- (3) Assess the moderating effect of the ABG on the relationship between consumer empowerment and purchase intention of cruelty-free cosmetic products.

Literature review

Purchase intention of cruelty-free cosmetic products

Purchase intention. The purchase intention can be considered a significant indicator of consumer behaviour since it can predetermine the likelihood of consumers making a choice to purchase a particular product (Khan *et al.*, 2021). Further, Samadi and Yaghoob-Nejadi (2009) describe the purchase intention as the likelihood that a consumer bought a specific product based on the interaction of his or her need for it, attitude towards it, and perceptions of it.

In many works of literature, it is observed there is an ABG between what consumers express and what consumers actually do. As a matter of fact, there is a gap between consumers who pretend to buy a product and consumers who actually buy it. This difference is often noticed when it comes to ethical purchasing, including the purchase of cruelty-free products (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). Nevertheless, it is proven that high purchase intentions are likely to be converted into actual purchases, which leads to a positive relationship between purchase intention and purchase behaviour.

In looking for theoretical foundations to back up the literature, it was discovered that the “Theory of Planned Behaviour” (TPB) is the most commonly utilised theory to study consumer purchasing behaviour. According to Ajzen (1991), the individual’s intention to perform a certain activity is at the heart of the TPB. It claims that three elements influence consumers’ purchase intention: attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control.

The TPB has also been the basis for several studies of consumer purchasing behaviour in the cruelty-free cosmetic market. Accordingly, an individual’s performance of certain behaviour is determined by his or her intent to perform that behaviour. Thus, the purchase intention of cruelty-free products is determined by the empowered consumer’s intention to behave ethically (Krivosheeva, 2021). Furthermore, because the TPB does not identify which beliefs are connected with which behaviours, it is up to the researcher to determine which beliefs are associated with which behaviours (George, 2004). The TPB provides a solid theoretical foundation for examining such a premise, as well as a framework for determining whether attitudes are related to the intent to engage in a specific behaviour, which should be related to the actual behaviour. The COVID-19 pandemic led to some changes in consumer behaviour, causing individuals to adopt new habits and behaviours and modify their attitudes toward more sustainable consumption. As a result, it was necessary to reconsider earlier studies that used TPB. The current study will also expand on previous works (Ajzen, 1991; George, 2004; Krivosheeva, 2021) connected with the TPB, especially in the context of South Asia, which most studies seem to have overlooked.

Cruelty-free products. Purchasing cruelty-free products is frequently discussed in existing literature as a component of ethical purchasing (Krivosheeva, 2021). To grasp the context and specifics of the phenomena of cruelty-free purchasing, we must first consider ethical purchasing in general. According to Krivosheeva (2021), ethical purchasing is defined as “the acquisition of commodities that are influenced by the moral factor, taking into account the conditions of production and their repercussions” (p. 11). Giesler and Veresiu (2014) state that

ethical consumers are aware that their private consumption has public consequences and their purchasing power can influence social change.

According to [Gulyás \(2008\)](#), ethical purchasing actions can be divided into six categories: non-purchasing, value-based regular shopping, boycott, positive boycott (boycott), utilisation, and placement after usage or disposal. In the context of the cosmetic market, cruelty-free is often referred to as the avoidance of testing cosmetic products or ingredients on animals.

The phenomena of cruelty-free purchase intention seem to be not limited only to developed nations but also to developing nations. For instance, [Pulm \(2021\)](#) has investigated the effect of brand types and cruelty-free labels on the cruelty-free purchase intention of cosmetics among Brazilian consumers. Moreover, [Dasunika and Gunatilake \(2020\)](#) have investigated factors affecting the purchase intention (financial factors, attitudes, social media, altruism and environmental knowledge) of cruelty-free cosmetics among Sri Lankan female consumers in the Colombo district and this study seems to have overlooked the impact of Westernisation on the cruelty-free purchase intention of a wide range of consumers as well as the influence of consumer empowerment and ABG.

Westernisation

Westernisation is a process coined within the last century with the rise of western nations. Historically, the West included countries of Europe, but at present, the United States of America is considered the greatest western power. The East, after its golden era of creating knowledge in fields such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, medicine and astrology, became a follower of the West and an imitator and adopter of its ideologies and culture ([Alrefai, 2013](#)). According to [Attanayake \(2003\)](#), the global spread of western consumption patterns and popular culture cleared the ground for the creation of a universal civilisation and global culture. [Hamilton \(1996\)](#) provides a comprehensive list of western values that includes: “primacy of reason and rationality, empiricism, the emergence of Science as a key cultural and intellectual component in contemporary society, universalism, a progressive view of history, individualism, a powerful rhetoric of freedom, the uniformity of human nature, representative institutions and secularism” (p. 73). [Sharma et al. \(1994\)](#) highlighted that westernisation is the acceptance of the cultural characteristics of western nations that are not indigenous to the home country. Moreover, [Hsu and Nien \(2007\)](#) have identified that westernisation of consumers can negatively affect the preference for domestic brands.

Since the late nineteenth century, education and literacy, in particular, have been continuously increasing ([Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2018](#)). The younger generations in Sri Lanka, on the other hand, are more open to novel ideas, including new ways of life, entertainment and consumer behaviour ([Samarasinghe and Samarasinghe, 2013](#)). Pressure groups such as NGOs and welfare organisations have made exclusive demands, posing moral and ethical pressures on society’s established norms. As a result, ethical consumerist movements have begun to emerge in the country. Currently, we see the rise of specific blogs and applications dedicated to the topic of cruelty-free purchasing in various internet resources and social networks. This is attributed to the technical advancement derived from the West. Therefore, it is probable to identify an impact posed by westernisation on the purchase intention of cruelty-free products as well.

The attitude is considered one of the major factors which influence purchasing behaviour under the TPB. The process of westernisation has resulted in a change in consumers’ attitudes towards cruelty-free products, where many consumers consider that it is “good” to purchase cruelty-free products as opposed to products tested on animals. Moreover, [Murray and Price \(2011\)](#) highlighted in their study that western standards of beauty can have an aspirational component which might lead to positive purchase intentions towards cosmetics

among Asian female consumers. Hence, it is probable to identify an impact posed by westernisation on the purchase intention of cruelty-free products. Therefore,

H1. The higher the westernisation, the higher the purchase intention of cruelty-free products

It was discussed in the theoretical part of the study that there have been changes in the ideologies of consumers in the East with the influence of westernisation and consumers in the East are more empowered than ever before. Consumers allocate their resources and abilities to persuade producers to change their business practices. Consumer choices are therefore considered key instruments for directing and correcting the market (Hunter *et al.*, 2006).

Consumer empowerment

Consumers are empowered, according to Denegri-Knott *et al.* (2006), when “he or she is free to behave as rational and self-interested agent” (p. 950). Consumers pool their resources and abilities to force producers to do things they would not normally do. Consumer choices are therefore good instruments for directing and correcting the market, resulting in more efficient production, better and less expensive products, societal progress and higher overall welfare. In literature consumer empowerment emphasises the links between the consumer’s skills, competencies, rights and abilities on one hand, and greater choice on the other (Hunter *et al.*, 2006).

Consumer empowerment in the areas of animal welfare and animal testing are intertwined and play a significant role in influencing consumer decisions to purchase cruelty-free products. In the context of cruelty-free purchasing, empowerment can be attributed to knowing how cosmetics are being tested (animal testing and alternative methods of testing), people are able to participate in cruelty-free purchasing where they are conscious of cruelty-free logos and symbols (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals [PETA] “Caring Consumer” cruelty-free logo, the Not Tested on Animals logo by Choose Cruelty-Free, and the Leaping Bunny logo) and they are aware of the impact their actions have on the number of animals that were hurt during animal testing (Krivosheeva, 2021).

Consumer empowerment in the areas of animal welfare and animal testing plays a significant role in influencing consumer purchase intention of cruelty-free products. The collection of empowered consumers has given rise to consumerist movements focussing on animal welfare such as PETA, Cruelty-Free Kitty and Choose Cruelty-Free (Krivosheeva, 2021).

Under the TPB, an increased understanding of animal use procedures in production will change consumer attitudes toward animal testing indicating consumers have a moral obligation to choose cruelty-free alternatives (McEachern *et al.*, 2007). This will influence the subjective norms of consumers, where their beliefs about what they should do will be based on the opinions of others and if they follow animal welfare organisations, they will believe that they should use cruelty-free products instead of products tested on animals. Furthermore, consumer empowerment will impact the perceived behavioural control under the TPB. When the consumers are more empowered with greater knowledge, skills and assertiveness, it will be easy for them to shift to cruelty-free products. Thus,

H2. Consumer empowerment mediates the relationship between westernisation and the purchase intention of cruelty-free products

Attitude-behaviour gap

Several works of literature concur that there is frequently a significant ABG that prohibits consumers from turning ethical intentions into actual purchasing behaviour (Sant, 2020).

When presented with a trade-off, consumers may prioritise other considerations such as price, quality and brand over ethical attributes. According to [Oretega \(1994\)](#), this ABG is typically correlated with higher pricing associated with animal welfare friendly products.

However, other factors such as customer confusion over product claims and insufficient information, may also contribute to this gap, limiting consumers' capacity to choose cruelty-free products in keeping with their intentions ([Carrigan and Attalla, 2001](#)). The peculiarities of ethical purchasing, as well as cruelty-free purchasing, are that the consumer frequently encounters an ABG. The TPB model is often used to comprehend ethical consumption and address the ABG, and it is used in the majority of research publications related to cruelty-free products. ABG can be crucial in engaging in ethical consumption activities ([Shaw et al., 2016](#)).

According to past literature, there is often an ABG that prevents consumers from converting their ethical intentions into actual purchasing behaviour ([Sant, 2020](#)). The TPB provides a concrete theoretical foundation for examining such a premise, as well as a framework for determining whether attitudes are related to the intent to engage in a specific behaviour, which should be related to the actual behaviour. Therefore

H3. ABG moderates the relationship between consumer empowerment and purchase intention of cruelty-free products

Refer to [Figure 1](#) for the conceptual framework of the study.

Research methodology

A positivist research philosophy has been adopted in this study to be aligned with extant literature (for example, [Samarasinghe and Ahsan, 2014](#)). Moreover, a survey strategy was adopted, where data were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire. The sample unit for the study was Sri Lankan consumers aged between 18 and 60 years because they can be considered adults who have the required knowledge, need and capability to purchase cosmetic products. However, as suggested by [Samarasinghe and Samarasinghe \(2013\)](#) and the rules of thumb proposed by [Roscoe \(1975\)](#), the current study comprised a convenience sample of 242 respondents in Sri Lanka who engaged in the purchase of cosmetic products and were aged between 18 and 60 years based on a margin of error of 5%. [Roscoe \(1975\)](#) has suggested that a sample size greater than 30 and less than 500 is appropriate for the majority of behavioural studies.

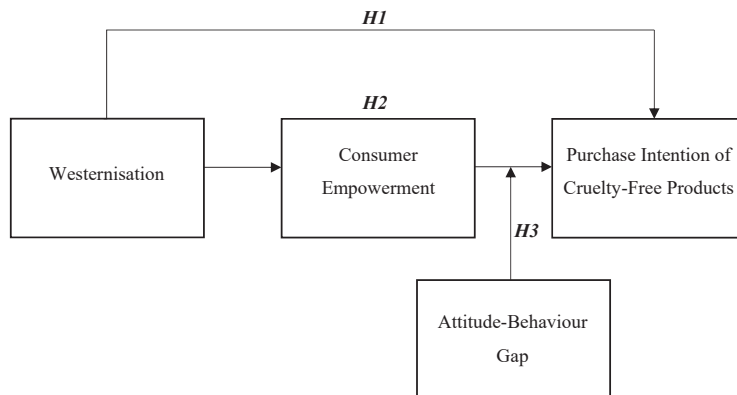


Figure 1.
Conceptual framework
for the study

Note(s): Author's Construction

An online self-administered questionnaire, similar to the previous literature (Krivosheeva, 2021; Sant, 2020) with guiding details, was used to collect data, as it is a convenient way of primary data collection from individual consumers. The questionnaire includes a series of scales based on existing literature that allow the researchers to collect information on elements that are important to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses and they were developed to discover the relationship between the independent variables identified and the purchase intention of cruelty-free products (dependent variable).

To gain a better knowledge of the sample and the consumer behaviour of the sample, questions to collect specific information about respondents such as age, gender, occupation and income level were also included in the questionnaire. The scale items for the dependent variable, "Purchase Intention of Cruelty-Free Products", have been adopted from behavioural intentions battery by Zeithaml *et al.* (1996). The mediating variable, "Consumer Empowerment", comprises scales adopted from the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) consumer empowerment (CE) Index (2020). "Attitude-Behaviour Gap", which is the moderating variable includes scale items that have been adopted from attitude measurement scale by Lombart and Louis (2014). The scale items for the independent variable "Westernisation", has been adopted from acculturation scale by Stigler *et al.* (2014). This acculturation scale by Stigler *et al.* (2014) indicates items ranging from preference to speak in western languages such as English, preference for western food such as pizza, and the preference to wear western clothing over traditional local clothing (refer to Table 1, a Table constructed by authors) [1]. All items in the scale were measured based on a five-point Likert scale where "1" being strongly disagreed and "5" being strongly agreed.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) which utilise parametric assessment and hypothesis testing through causal modelling has been considered advantageous (Cenfetelli and Bassellier, 2009; Hair *et al.*, 2011; Henseler *et al.*, 2009) over first-generation techniques such as multiple regression (Rezaei, 2014). Moreover, it is suitable for exploratory and confirmatory studies and the use of goodness of indices (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012). However, given that more descriptive analysis is needed, multiple regression analysis has been adopted in this paper since, Barret (2007), has described that SEM is a technique that fits models to data and it is not a tool for descriptive analysis. Additionally, it seems that most related studies (for example, McEachern *et al.*, 2007; Sant, 2020) have adopted multiple regression as the data analysis technique. Therefore, to be in line with related studies this paper to have adopted the multiple regression method instead of SEM.

Data analysis and findings

In terms of the profiles of the respondents (refer to Table 2) [2], 58% of the respondents ($n = 140$) were female while 68% ($n = 164$) of the respondents were from the age group of 18–24 years and this is followed by the age category of 25–32 years which is approximately 13% of the respondents. In terms of education level, 58% of the respondents are undergraduates and around are 34% of the respondents are unemployed. This study has considered the multivariate assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity in proceeding with the analysis. In terms of measuring normality, all coefficients of Skewness and Kurtosis are less than one. As a result, we may say that all the variables are distributed normally. The results also indicate that there is homoscedasticity since the residuals are dispersed around the 0 value (Goldfeld and Quandt, 1965). Finally, in terms of multicollinearity, since all of the VIFs (variance inflation factors) are less than 10, the collinearity statistics show that there is no multicollinearity issue and that the independent variables are not perfectly or highly correlated.

Moreover, in terms of reliability (refer to Table 3), all scale items are internally consistent; therefore, nothing has been eliminated. Note: purchase intention of cruelty-free products (PICF), westernisation (W), CE and ABG.

Variable	Items	Source
1. Purchase intention of cruelty free products	I would say positive things about cruelty-free products to other people I would encourage friends and relatives to purchase cruelty-free products I would purchase more cruelty-free products in the next few years I will continue to purchase cruelty-free products even if their prices increase I will purchase cruelty-free cosmetic products even if their prices are higher than conventional cosmetic products	Adopted from Zeithmal et al. (1996) (with modifications)
2. Westernisation	I often speak in English I often speak in my mother tongue (Sinhala/Tamil) I prefer watching English movies and TV shows and listening to English songs over movies and TV shows and songs in my mother tongue I often eat western food (such as Pizza, Burgers) I often eat Sri Lankan food (such as Rice and Curry, Hoppers) I prefer wearing western clothing (such as jeans, t-shirts) over traditional Sri Lankan clothing (such as Sarongs, Osari)	Adopted from Stigler et al. (2014) (with modifications)
3. Consumer empowerment	I have knowledge about fundamental consumer rights, consumer responsibilities and legislations protecting the interests of consumers I have the ability to perform basic arithmetic operations deemed necessary for consumers to make informed purchase decisions, such as calculating prices I have the ability to interpret packaging information and can correctly identify and interpret various commonly used logos related to consumer information I have the habit of reading terms and conditions, disclaimers and other relevant consumer information I complain and seek redress in instances of unfair practices, and proactively participate in activities related to consumer protection I feel informed, protected and empowered as a consumer when participating in transactions in the market	Adopted from ASEAN consumer empowerment index (with modifications)
4. Attitude-behaviour gap	I believe humans have the right to use animals for testing whether products are acceptable for human use I believe testing done with animals for cosmetic products is unnecessary and cruel I think too much fuss is made over the welfare of animals these days when there are many human problems that need to be solved I have a favourable attitude towards cosmetic products not tested on animals I appreciate cruelty-free cosmetic products	Adopted from Lombart and Louis (2014) (with modifications)

Table 1.
Scales adopted

Source(s): Constructed by authors

Attribute	Detail	Frequency
Gender	Male	102
	Female	140
Age	18 to 24	164
	25 to 34	32
	34 to 45	24
	46 to 60	22
Income	Unemployed	83
	Less than Rs.15,000	24
	Rs.15,000- Rs.30,000	43
	Rs.31,000- Rs.50,000	40
	Rs.51,000- Rs.100,000	33
Level of Education	More than Rs.100,000	19
	Ordinary Level	1
	Advanced Level	28
	Undergraduate	140
	Graduate	66
	Post graduate	7

Source(s): Survey data

Table 2. Data profile

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
PICFP	0.870	5
CE	0.757	6
ABG	0.745	3
W	0.727	6

Source(s): Survey data

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha - reliability tests

Validity of the regression model

The coefficient of determination (*R* Square), as indicated by the model summaries in Table 4, is 0.326. This shows the percentage of the dependent variable (purchase intention of cruelty-free products) that the regression model has successfully explained. The difference between the *R* squared and adjusted *R* squared values is nevertheless minimal. This shows that no extraneous independent variables have been added and the model has been able to account for 32.6% of the variation in consumers' purchase intention of cruelty-free products. The multiple correlation is 0.571, which shows how the independent factors and purchase intention of cruelty-free products are jointly correlated.

No variable is omitted from the analysis because all of these variables are interrelated. Table 5 provides the regression Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results. Accordingly, the *F* statistic's likelihood is 0.000. This indicates that the regression model is acceptable because it

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.571	0.326	0.317	0.55692	2.154

Note(s): Predictor variables include CE, ABG, and W against the dependent variable PICFP

Source(s): Survey data

Table 4. Model summaries - factors impacting purchase intention of cruelty-free products

and the variable are both highly significant. Consumer empowerment, the ABG and westernisation all have an impact on the purchase intention of cruelty-free products.

In Table 6 each variable's impact on the dependent variable is listed. Given that the significance value is 0.000, the probability of consumer empowerment and the ABG are both highly significant. The individual beta values are, respectively, 0.227 and 0.444. Therefore, the purchase intention of cruelty-free products is significantly and positively impacted by consumer empowerment and the ABG. Also, westernisation has a significance value of 0.090 and a beta value of 0.104. At a confidence level of 10%, westernisation seems to have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention of cruelty-free products. Therefore, westernisation also has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention of cruelty-free products.

Hypotheses testing

H1: The higher the westernisation, the higher the purchase intention of cruelty-free products

The correlation analysis shows that there is a significant, positive, and moderate relationship between westernisation and the purchase intention of cruelty-free products. The coefficient of correlation between these two variables was 0.290. The likelihood that westernisation and the purchase intention of cruelty-free products are related is 0.000. The likelihood of less than 1% makes this link highly significant. This indicates that the increase in westernisation results in an increase in consumers' purchase intention of cruelty-free products. We can hence accept the first research hypothesis, **H1:** The higher the westernisation, the higher the purchase intention of cruelty-free products.

H2: Consumer empowerment mediates the relationship between westernisation and the purchase intention of cruelty-free products

When a variable fully explains the relationship between the predictor and the criterion, it is said to "act as a mediator" (Baron and Kenny, 1986, p. 1176). The Sobel test, a common

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	31.859	3	10.620	34.240	0.000
Residual	65.754	212	0.310		
Total	97.613	215			

Table 5.
Regressions ANOVA

Note(s): Predictor variables CE, ABG and W have been presented against dependent variable PICFP
Source(s): Survey data

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	0.460	0.393		1.171	0.243
CE	0.289	0.076	0.227	3.783	0.000
ABP	0.432	0.057	0.444	7.630	0.000
W	0.159	0.093	0.104	1.704	0.090

Table 6.
Coefficients – individual effect

Note(s): Dependent variable PICFP
Source(s): Survey data

technique for evaluating mediation effects, was used to assess the mediating role of consumer empowerment on the relationship between westernisation and consumers' purchase intention of cruelty-free products. The significance of the relationship between westernisation and purchase intention of cruelty-free products is assessed using simple regression, as shown in Table 7. Therefore, the Sobel test was performed.

3.601 was the result of the Sobel Test. According to the normal distribution with a confidence level of 10%, this value is within the rejection region. As a result, hypothesis H₂: Consumer empowerment mediates the relationship between westernisation and purchase intention of cruelty-free products can be accepted. It was determined through additional analyses if the mediating effect mentioned above has a partial or full effect. In order to test the Sobel test, three variables were used: the independent variable of consumer empowerment, the mediating variable of westernisation and the dependent variable of the purchase intention of cruelty-free products. The beta values and standard error values that were determined using the aforementioned procedure are shown in Tables 8–12.

The Sobel test produced a result of 3.378, which, with a confidence level of 10%, is within the normal distribution's rejection range. Therefore, we can draw the conclusion that

		PICFP
CE	Pearson Correlation	0.323**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	242
ABG	Pearson Correlation	0.501
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	242
W	Pearson Correlation	0.290**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	242

Table 7. Correlations analysis – relationship between purchase intention and other variables

Note(s): ** indicates significance at $p = 0.000$
Source(s): Survey data

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	2.184	0.385	0.290		5.668	0.000
W	0.443	0.100			4.437	0.000

Table 8. Effect of westernisation on purchase intention of cruelty-free products

Note(s): Dependent variable- PICFP
Source(s): Survey data

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	2.098	0.297	0.337		7.059	0.000
W	0.403	0.077			5.235	0.000

Table 9. Effect of westernisation on consumer empowerment

Note(s): Dependent variable- CE
Source(s): Survey data

consumer empowerment has a partial mediation influence on the relationship between westernisation and the intention to buy products free of animal testing.

H3: ABG moderates the relationship between consumer empowerment and consumers' purchase intention of cruelty-free products

According to [Baron and Kenny \(1986, p. 1174\)](#), a moderator is a “qualitative or quantitative variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relation between an independent or predictor variable and a dependent or criterion variable”. The evaluation of the moderating effect of the ABG on the relationship between consumer empowerment and purchase intention of cruelty-free products was done using a moderator regression model and the results are presented in [Table 12](#).

The moderator regression model's findings imply that the moderator's *p* value is negligible. As a result, the null hypothesis can be accepted according to which there is no moderator effect. Therefore, there is enough evidence for **H3**: ABG moderates the relationship between consumer empowerment and purchase intention of cruelty-free products to be true.

Discussion of findings

Discussion of hypotheses

In paying attention to the first hypothesis, the findings of the statistical tests show that the higher the westernisation, the higher the purchase intention of cruelty-free products.

Table 10.
Effect of consumer empowerment on purchase intention of cruelty-free products

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 (Constant)	2.382	0.304	0.323	7.839	0.000
CE	0.412	0.083		4.991	0.000

Note(s): Dependent variable- PICFP
Source(s): Survey data

Table 11.
Effect of consumer empowerment on westernisation

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 (Constant)	2.811	0.198	0.337	14.179	0.000
CE	0.282	0.054		5.235	0.000

Note(s): Dependent variable- W
Source(s): Survey data

Table 12.
Individual beta values of moderator regression model

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 (Constant)	1.610	0.426		3.781	0.000
W	0.297	0.104	0.195	2.871	0.005
CE	0.313	0.087	0.246	3.621	0.000
Moderator	-0.044	0.040	-0.072	-1.108	0.269

Note(s): Dependent variable- PICFP
Source(s): Survey data

Furthermore, this confirms [Attanayake's \(2003\)](#) findings, which indicate that the worldwide spread of western consumption patterns and culture built the foundation for the creation of practices such as ethical consumption. Hence, it can be concluded that westernisation has influenced the purchase intention of cruelty-free products.

In paying attention to [hypothesis 2](#), with westernisation, it appears that consumers have become more empowered and subsequently consumer empowerment increases the purchase intention of cruelty-free products. The consumers “agreed” that they have the ability to interpret packaging information and can correctly identify and interpret various commonly used logos, including cruelty-free logos. They further “agreed” that with the influence of the West, they have become more informed, protected and empowered as consumers than ever before in making purchase decisions. Under TPB, [McEachern et al. \(2007\)](#) stated that the increased understanding of animal use procedures in production will change consumer attitudes toward animal testing, indicating consumers have a moral obligation to choose cruelty-free alternatives and this highlights the changes in the purchase intention of an empowered consumer. Therefore, it can be confirmed that consumer empowerment mediates the relationship between westernisation and purchase intention of cruelty-free products.

Finally, in terms of the third hypothesis, there was limited evidence to support this hypothesis because the statistical tests yielded insignificant results. A moderating effect of consumer empowerment on the relationship between westernisation and purchase intention of cruelty-free products may be possible, according to some existing literature that emphasises the importance of consumer empowerment on the ABG on the purchase intention of cruelty-free products ([Krivosheeva, 2021](#)). However, there was no similar moderating effect of consumer empowerment in the context of the Sri Lankan cosmetic market. Nevertheless, there are also a few different views with regard to cruelty-free purchase intention. For example, [Murray and Price \(2011\)](#) have suggested that westernisation might not always lead to higher purchase intention among Asian consumers, due to various cultural factors. On the other hand, [Dasunika and Gunatilake \(2020\)](#) have found that attitude has no significant influence on the purchase intention of cruelty-free cosmetics among Sri Lankan consumers.

Implications for theory and practice

From a theoretical standpoint, the research extends on earlier studies, which often focused on assessing personal variables and socio-cultural factors like age, gender, occupation, and religious beliefs on the purchase intention of cruelty-free products ([Krivosheeva, 2021](#); [Sheehan and Lee, 2014](#)). The focus of this study was on how the notion of westernisation impacts consumers' purchase intention of cruelty-free products and it further extends to studies such as [Attanayake \(2003\)](#). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic led to some changes in consumer behaviour, causing individuals to adopt new habits and behaviours and modify their attitudes toward more sustainable consumption. As a result, it was necessary to revise earlier studies. The current study will also expand on previous works ([Ajzen, 1991](#); [George, 2004](#); [Krivosheeva, 2021](#)) connected with the underlying theory of the study, namely, the theory of planned behaviour. Accordingly, the theoretical implication of this paper is likely to lead to the extension of related studies (e.g. [George, 2004](#); [Krivosheeva, 2021](#)) as well as studies that have adopted the theory of planned behaviour.

From a practical perspective, this study will be useful for managers from multi-national enterprises (MNEs) which are often originated from Western nations. The study gives fresh knowledge on the behaviour of Sri Lankan consumers in the Sri Lankan cosmetic market, which is distinctly diverse from developed markets, as it was focused on the Sri Lankan market and explored the idiosyncrasies of Sri Lankan consumers. Therefore, from a practical

perspective, this paper would be useful for managers of MNEs as well as Sri Lankan consumers of the cosmetic market.

Limitations and avenues for future research

It is important to note that this study is restricted to a limited number of Sri Lankan cities, age categories and socio-cultural factors, and that it focuses on a very narrow research field of cruelty-free products. Hence, there are prospects to extend research in this area. Furthermore, convenience sampling was used in the study for ease of use, which can have an impact on how accurately and validly the results represent the entire target population. As a result, the sample does not accurately reflect the target population. The current study with a larger sample size for greater representation and perhaps including the entire Sri Lankan population could be done. Moreover, the study has used a cross-sectional survey design which collects data as at a specific point in time and it may not support the development of a causal relationship. Therefore, future studies might concentrate on how consumers' purchase intentions have changed over time by using longitudinal approaches with a larger sample size can be conducted and they can also investigate the impact of westernised ideology on cruelty-free purchase intention.

Conclusion

The primary objective of the study was to identify the impact of westernisation on the consumers' purchase intention of cruelty-free products in the context of the Sri Lankan cosmetic market and this study bridges a significant gap by exploring the specifics of cruelty-free products in the Sri Lankan cosmetic market. To meet the objectives of the research, three hypotheses were developed; two of them were supported, while the third had inadequate data to back it up. In order to gather evidence for the presented hypotheses, responses to an online survey questionnaire given to 242 consumers were analysed. Thereby, it was found that the higher the westernisation, the higher the purchase intention of cruelty-free products.

This study seems to extend existing literature related to westernisation, purchase intention of cruelty-free products and the underlying theory, the theory of planned behaviour. Furthermore, business organisations, specifically MNEs, were given some recommendations based on the managerial implications of the research.

Notes

1. [Table 1](#) is available on request
2. [Table 2](#) is available on request

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