
From Interest to Actual Use: The Importance and Performance of Factors Influencing Consumer Decisions on Biobased Apparel

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Abstract

Over recent decades, the rapid growth of the textile and fashion industry has significantly impacted the environment, highlighting the urgent need for a shift toward more sustainable practices. Biobased apparel presents an opportunity to reduce environmental harm. However, understanding the factors driving consumer acceptance is crucial for a successful transition, making this knowledge essential for marketers and policymakers. Despite the importance of this shift, research on consumer decision-making regarding biobased apparel remains limited. To address this gap, this study examines consumers’ decision-making processes related to biobased apparel and identifies the importance and performance of factors influencing their behavioural determinants, providing insights for further managerial actions. To assess the importance and performance of factors for managerial attention and actions, this research employs the Comprehensive Behavioural Decision Model for Biobased Products (CBDM-BBP) alongside Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) and the Importance-Performance Matrix Analysis (IPMA), an advanced technique in PLS-SEM. The IPMA contrasts the total effects of latent variables/manifest variables on a target variable (impact) with their rescaled average latent variable scores (performance), allowing for a clear graphical representation of critical areas for attention and action. The IPMA results categorise factors into four key areas based on their importance and performance for managerial actions: high priority (first area), important (second area), low priority (third area), and not impactful (fourth area). Based on data from a survey of 525 consumers in the Republic of Ireland, a recognised test market with strong government commitment to the bioeconomy and abundant natural resources, the findings from two layers (latent variables and manifest variables) highlight that marketers and policymakers should target specific areas for development and intervention at each behavioural stage.

It is recognised that social norms and willingness to pay are of high importance but show relatively low performance with use behaviour (the first area). Similarly, for interest, intention,

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and willingness to pay, social and personal norms are highly important but underperform compared to other latent variables in the proposed model. Therefore, these factors should be prioritised for improvement, as enhancing their performance could significantly impact overall outcomes. Further, analysis of manifest variables highlights that injunctive social norms (what others do) demonstrate greater importance but lower performance than descriptive social norms (what others say) in influencing consumer use behaviour. For personal norms, a sense of moral obligation and feelings of guilt are more important but underperform in driving consumer interest and intentions. In contrast, the manifest variable compatibility with consumers' morals, located in the second area, exhibits both greater importance and performance in influencing consumer willingness to pay. Among the manifest variables for willingness to pay, intention to pay a premium and interest in paying a premium respectively have shown greater importance but lower performance in influencing consumer use behaviour.

Moreover, the second area of the matrix highlights that trust holds significant importance and performs strongly across all behavioural determinants. Similarly, attitude demonstrates high importance and strong performance for interest, intention, and use behaviour. Among the behavioural determinants, interest and intention consistently show both high importance and performance for intention, use behaviour, and willingness to pay. These factors play a critical role in shaping behavioural outcomes and, given their strong performance and significance, do not require immediate improvement. However, efforts should focus on maintaining their effectiveness to ensure continued support for achieving desired outcomes. Within the trust manifest variables, trust in products and trust in governments show higher importance but lower performance (area one) in shaping consumer interest, intentions, and use behaviour (—values— > mean score). Conversely, trust in nongovernmental agencies and academia exhibits both higher importance and performance in influencing consumer interest and intentions (second area). Additionally, trust in products is also positioned in the second area for its role in influencing consumers' willingness to pay a premium.

For the remaining latent and manifest variables in the model (i.e., awareness of consequences of negative effects of conventional products, sense of responsibility, perception, awareness, objective knowledge, and subjective knowledge), the resources allocated to these areas could either be redirected to more impactful factors without significantly affecting the overall results (area three) or are generally considered lower priorities for improvement or resource allocation (area four).

Keywords: consumer behaviour, sustainable textiles, biobased apparel, bioeconomy, importance, performance analysis