

## Article

# Which Values Matter Most to Romanian Consumers? Exploring the Impact of Green Attitudes and Communication on Buying Behavior

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**Abstract:** The increasing commitment to sustainable consumption has intensified the scholarly focus on the determinants of environmentally friendly consumer behavior. This investigation provides an insight into the intricate interplay between green consumer values, functional (FV), conditional (CV), social (SV), and emotional (EV), and their impact on buying behavior (BB). Using survey data, we scrutinized the mediating roles of attitudes toward purchasing green products (APGP) and receptivity to green communication (RGC). Using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), the empirical analysis yielded a mix of supported and unsupported claims about the mediation effects on the relationship between consumer values and buying behavior. Direct effects of FV on BB were significant, but the indirect effect through APGP was not, suggesting that APGP does not mediate the relationship between FV and BB, and that consumers' functional value perceptions influence their buying behavior independently of their attitudes toward green products. Both direct and indirect effects of EV and FV on BB through APGP and RGC were significant, suggesting partial mediation. The results suggest that APGP and RGC partially mediate the effects of EV and FV on BB but do not mediate the effects of CV and SV on BB. Comparing these findings with previous research, we observe some parallels and divergences. Our study confirms the significant direct effect of FV on buying behavior, consistent with previous studies that underscore the importance of tangible benefits in influencing consumer decisions. Furthermore, the significant direct and indirect effects of EV on BB and APGP in our results are consistent with previous research, suggesting that emotional factors play a decisive role in green purchasing behaviors. However, factors such as CV and SV were found to have no impact in our research compared to previous studies. These discrepancies suggest that while CV influences attitudes, it may not strongly influence purchasing behavior through the mediating constructs in our model. Furthermore, the results imply that social factors may influence attitudes but do not necessarily translate into actual purchasing behavior in our context. Our study also reveals that RGC plays a substantial role in influencing buying behavior, indicating a significant total effect greater than indicated in previous research. These insights illuminate the complex mechanisms by which consumer attitudes and communication receptivity shape eco-conscious purchasing choices. Theoretical contributions enrich the discourse on green consumer behavior, while practical implications guide marketers in crafting communication strategies that resonate with consumer values and attitudes, thus fostering sustainable consumption patterns.

**Keywords:** green consumer behavior; sustainable purchasing decisions; attitudes toward green products; green communication receptivity; structural equation modeling



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## 1. Introduction

The environmental degradation which is caused by producing and consuming non-sustainable products and services has led to increasing awareness of environmental issues mainly because of its far-reaching implications which affect not only the natural environment but also the health and ultimately the well-being of the worldwide population [1].

Both governments and companies participated in efforts to grow the demand for sustainable products, which led to a search for better understanding of consumer behavior [2]. All of these efforts are aimed at changing consumer behavior to be more oriented toward purchasing green products. This has sparked interest among researchers and marketers alike, leading to a multitude of studies that aim to understand the factors that influence consumer attitudes and behaviors toward green products. From an academic perspective, the study of green consumer behavior is highly relevant as it intersects with various disciplines, including marketing, psychology, and environmental science [3,4]. It provides insights into how consumers make decisions and what factors influence their choices, which can inform the development of strategies to promote sustainable consumption. However, despite the wealth of research in this area, our understanding of green consumer behavior remains fragmented and incomplete [5]. Therefore, the study of green consumer behavior is not only academically relevant but also beneficial for addressing the pressing issue of environmental sustainability.

One of the key theories that has been used to understand consumer behavior is the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) [6]. This theory provides an extensive framework for understanding why consumers choose certain products over others, based on five consumption values: functional, conditional, emotional, social, and cognitive. However, while the TCV has been widely applied in the context of traditional consumer behavior, its application in the context of green consumer behavior has been limited. In response to this gap in the literature, our research aims to use part of the TCV in the context of green consumer behavior. We seek to understand how these consumption values influence consumer attitudes and behaviors towards green products and, in doing so, contribute to a greater understanding of green consumer behavior.

However, when it comes to green consumer behavior, the green perceived value (GPV) has been found to be more prevalent. Chen and Chang [7] applied the GPV construct to study the enhancement of green purchase intentions and found that GPV has a positive effect on green trust and green purchase intentions. This suggests that consumers' perceptions of the value of green products play a key role in their decision to buy these products. Despite these findings, Chen and Chang [7] used a unidimensional GPV construct, which may not fully capture the complex and multidimensional nature of perceived value. Recognizing this limitation, subsequent research has suggested handling GPV as a multidimensional construct and proposed four subconstructs: functional value, conditional value, social value, and emotional value [8–11].

Our research builds on these findings by extending the GPV construct. We introduce two additional constructs: attitude toward purchasing green products (APGP) and receptivity to green communication (RGC). These constructs capture positive attitudes towards buying green products [11] and their receptivity to green marketing communication [12], respectively. By integrating these constructs into our model, we can examine how individual perceived values connect with consumer satisfaction, affecting loyalty and price consciousness.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the mediating roles of APGP and RGC in the relationship between different consumer values (functional value, emotional value, conditional value, and social value) and BB toward green products. This study provides insights from the Romanian market, and as this market is considered, the application of GPV provides an opportunity to gather valuable insights into the consumption patterns and preferences of Romanian consumers. While there have been studies that used some elements specific to the GPV construct in the Romanian context [13–15], they were not specifically focused on green consumer behavior. However, specific studies applying GPV to understand green consumer behavior in the Romanian market seem to be limited. There are studies that have explored sustainable consumer behavior in Romania [16,17], but they do not explicitly apply GPV. Therefore, applying GPV to study green consumer behavior in the Romanian market represents the added value of this study by filling a gap in the

existing literature and providing a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing green consumer behavior in Romania.

Research on green consumer behavior is important in the Romanian market as it is particularly relevant given the increasing awareness of environmental sustainability and the major shifts in sustainable consumer behavior observed in Romania [16]. Moreover, given Romania's status as a member of the European Union (EU) and its commitment to the sustainability goals outlined by the EU, such as achieving net zero emissions, understanding consumer behavior towards green products becomes imperative. Romania, as part of the EU, is subject to various regulations and initiatives [18–20], including promoting sustainability and reducing environmental impact. Therefore, studying consumer attitudes and behaviors regarding green products within this context is important for aligning marketing strategies with both national and EU sustainability objectives.

Our research builds on the TCV and GPV, both of which are well-established frameworks in the field of consumer behavior as they have been validated by numerous studies [11,12,21]. This research not only builds on the TCV and GPV but also extends them by considering additional factors that are specific to the context of green products, thus contributing to its originality. With the aim of contributing to a more extensive understanding of green consumer behavior, the research also provides a robust and credible scale to examine consumer behavior toward green consumption. This, we believe, will pave the way for more effective marketing strategies and contribute to the larger goal of promoting sustainable consumption in Romania.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: we continue with Section 2, containing a thorough review of the literature, dividing it into empirical and theoretical components. The empirical review examines recent studies on green consumer behavior, focusing on the dimensions of GPV. Following this, the theoretical review explores the foundational concepts underpinning our hypothesis development, which follows. Moving forward, Section 3 represents the methods and details our data collection strategy, analytical approach using PLS-SEM, and our efforts to mitigate potential common method biases. Subsequently, Section 4 presents the results of our empirical analysis in the results section. Finally, the discussion and conclusions sections synthesize the theoretical and practical implications of our findings while also addressing limitations and suggesting future research directions.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Empirical Review

Based on GPV and the foundational work of Woo and Kim [11], who elucidated the profound impact of GPV on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, further studies have fortified this understanding. For example, Huang [22] demonstrated that consumer perceptions and attitudes toward green building housing products significantly influence purchase intentions and willingness to pay. Similarly, Zhuang et al. [23] conducted a meta-analysis that revealed that GPV, along with attitude and green trust, considerably affects green purchase intentions, with cognitive factors, individual characteristics, and social factors playing an important role. Furthermore, Mahama Braimah et al. [24] found that consumers' perceptions of the environmental friendliness of a product significantly influenced their willingness to pay a premium for green products. Additionally, another study [25] revealed that consumers' perceptions of the social value of green products played an important role in shaping their purchase intentions.

Furthermore, research by Lin and Zhou [26] corroborates the idea that consumers' perceptions of green value positively affect their intentions to buy green products. These studies collectively affirm that the multifaceted dimensions of GPV, which encompass functional, conditional, social, and emotional values, are integral in shaping consumer attitudes and subsequent purchase behaviors towards green products.

There are several studies that found that consumer buying behavior is influenced by functional value [27]. This suggests that the functional attributes of green products,

such as their quality, durability, and performance, play an important role in the shaping of consumer purchase decisions. Consumers often prefer green products over non-green products when their product qualities are similar [28]. This indicates that the functional value of green products extends beyond their tangible attributes and includes intangible benefits, such as contributing to environmental sustainability. Furthermore, a recent meta-analysis by Mason et al. [21] found that consumption values, including functional value, have a positive significant and moderate effect on consumer behavior. Another study by Kremel [29] found that functional value characteristics, such as convenience and price, were the core of sustainable consumption.

The price of green products should be appropriate in relation to value for money [30]. Recent research [31] found that pricing has a significant effect on the buying behavior of consumers. This implies that consumers evaluate the cost of green products against their perceived benefits, which can include both the functional benefits of the product and the added value of contributing to environmental sustainability. Further research has shown that conditional value can significantly influence consumer buying behavior. For example, a study by Sharma et al. [32] found that product-related factors such as price, availability of green products, and conditional value can negatively affect the intention/behavior of green purchases.

Supporting environmental issues makes consumers more socially attractive [33]. This indicates that consumers who purchase green products and support environmental causes are perceived more positively by others, which can enhance their social value. This aligns with the findings of a study by Caniëls et al. [34], which found that the green buying behavior of young people who perceive the high inconvenience of buying green products is largely influenced by the social value attached to buying green products. Furthermore, Mason et al. [21] found that while emotional value is the most influential predictor of consumer behavior, social value is the weakest.

Supporting environmental protection makes consumers feel meaningful and special [35]. This suggests that the emotional value of green products is not just about the individual emotional satisfaction they provide but also about the broader emotional benefits associated with supporting environmental sustainability. Further research has shown that emotional value can significantly influence consumer purchasing behavior. For example, a study by Wijekoon and Sabri [36] found that emotional value, along with other factors, influences the purchase intention of green products. This suggests that marketers must consider the emotional value of their green products and ensure that they evoke positive emotions in consumers. Furthermore, a study by Li et al. [37] revealed that altruistic and biospheric values had a significant positive impact on the intention of purchasing a green product, while egoistic values had a negative impact. This indicates that the emotional value of green products is influenced not only by the product itself but also by the broader values and beliefs of consumers.

Consumers are willing to pay more for a product if they know that its producer is environmentally friendly [38,39]. This indicates that consumers' attitudes towards green products are influenced not only by the products themselves but also by the practices of the companies that produce them [40]. Furthermore, consumers also persuade others not to purchase certain products harmful to the environment [41,42]. This indicates that consumers' purchasing behavior is influenced not only by their personal preferences but also by their desire to influence the purchasing behavior of others towards more environmentally friendly choices.

## 2.2. Theoretical Review

The TCV is a fundamental concept in the research of marketing and consumer behavior. It provides information on the motivation for consumer consumption behavior through consumption values [6]. The theory suggests that the choice of products is influenced by five consumption values: functional, conditional, emotional, social, and epistemic [43]. The TCV has been applied to various fields, including marketing, tourism, and management. It

has been used to explain consumer behavior on a large scale, and a significant amount of the literature has focused on investigating how consumption values influence consumer behaviors. However, in the realm of green consumer behavior, GPV (functional value, conditional value, social value, and emotional value) has become a more prevalent construct.

*Functional value (FV)* is part of the consumer perception of green products as offering good value for money, reasonably priced, well made to reduce environmental distortion, and maintaining an acceptable standard of quality [9]. This is particularly relevant in today's market, where consumers are becoming more and more aware of the environmental impact of their consumption choices.

*Conditional value (CV)* refers to the circumstances that could influence the purchase of green products. Consumers may be more inclined to purchase green products if they are offered at a discount, come with promotional incentives, or are readily available [44]. Therefore, the conditional value of green products is not just about the circumstances under which they are purchased but also about the conditions that make them more appealing to consumers.

*Social value (SV)* refers to the social benefits that consumers derive from purchasing green products. Buying these products can create a positive impression on others, improve how consumers are perceived by others, contribute to feeling accepted by others, and provide social approval [45].

*Emotional value (EV)* is related to the emotional satisfaction consumers get from purchasing green products. Consumers can derive enjoyment, feel relaxed, and experience a sense of well-being from buying these products [43,46].

*Attitudes toward purchasing green products (APGP)* refers to the positive attitudes consumers have towards purchasing green products. Consumers can view purchasing these products as valuable, positive, and beneficial behaviors [27]. This suggests that the attitude towards green products is not just about the environmental benefits they provide but also about the perceived value they offer to consumers. Green products are products that aim to protect or enhance the environment during their production, use, or disposal by conserving resources and minimizing the use of toxic agents, pollution, and waste [47]. Durif et al. [48] argue that the definition of green products is still unclear and lacks a commonly accepted definition. They suggest that the concept of green products should be viewed from three different perspectives: academic, industrial, and consumer.

From an academic perspective, green products are those that cause less environmental problems than conventional products and, in fact, contribute to solving environmental problems [49]. From an industrial perspective, green products are those that meet increased consumer demand and increased supply by companies and offer consumer and environmental protection [50]. From a consumer perspective, green products are those that are perceived as being environmentally respectful and are associated with expenditures related to products and services [51]. For this particular research, we will approach the consumer perspective to understand a green product.

Therefore, the attitude towards green products is not only about the environmental benefits they provide but also about the perceived value they offer to consumers. This value is multifaceted, encompassing the tangible benefits of the product, such as its quality and performance, and the intangible benefits, such as its contribution to environmental sustainability. This understanding of green products further reinforces the importance of APGP in influencing consumer behavior toward these products.

*Buying behavior (BB)* encapsulates the actions that consumers take towards buying products. In the context of our research, we study the green buyer behavior which is not just about the act of buying but also the conscious choices and efforts made in the process. Consumers can make an effort to purchase energy-efficient products and appliances, steer clear of products with excessive packaging, opt for products that minimize pollution, and switch products or brands for ecological reasons [12,52]. This suggests that the buying behavior toward green products extends beyond the act of purchasing and includes conscious choices and efforts by consumers in their buying process.

*Receptivity to green communication (RGC)* refers to the positive response of consumers to green marketing communication. Consumers who are receptive to green communication endorse brands that advocate for environmental causes [53]. They tend to pay attention to advertising messages that address environmental issues and respond positively to brands that incorporate green messages in their advertising [54]. The inclusion of green messages in advertisements influences their attitude towards those advertisements. These consumers believe that green advertising has value and consider it to be an essential form of promotion [55]. They are open to purchasing products that are marketed as environmentally friendly and respond favorably when brands use green messages in their ads.

### 2.3. Hypothesis Development

Drawing from the recent literature, our hypotheses are informed by the profound impact of FV, CV, SV, and EV on consumers' attitudes and intentions towards green products as well as the role of APGP in mediating these relationships. Although Woo and Kim [11] studied the relationship between FV, CV, SV, and EV on APGP, together with the influence of APGP on purchase intention, revealing significant and positive relationships between these variables, we believe that the mediating role of APGP between the relationships between FV, CV, SV, and EV and BB may reveal new mechanisms by which buyers consider them when adopting a particular purchase behavior. In addition, we will explain the rationale that led to the hypotheses of the study.

FV is part of the consumer perception of green products as offering good value for money [9]. This is relevant because consumers often prefer green products over non-green products when their qualities are similar [28]. We assume that when consumers perceive green products as offering good value for money and environmental benefits, this leads to positive attitudes (APGP) towards these products and, consequently, influences their buying behavior (BB). Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H1.** *The relationship between FV and BB is mediated by APGP.*

CV refers to the circumstances that could influence the purchase of green products [44]. Consumers may be more inclined to purchase green products if they are offered at a discount. We assume that favorable conditions such as discounts and availability of green products [32,44] lead to positive APGP, which in turn influences consumers' green purchase behavior (BB). Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H2.** *The relationship between CV and BB is mediated by APGP.*

SV refers to the social benefits that consumers derive from purchasing green products [45]. We assume that consumers' desire for the social approval and positive perceptions associated with purchasing green products [34,45] leads to positive APGP, driving their green buying behavior (BB). Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H3.** *The relationship between SV and BB is mediated by APGP.*

EV is related to the emotional satisfaction consumers obtain from purchasing green products [43]. We assume that emotional satisfaction derived from purchasing green products [36,43] influences positive APGP, which in turn affects consumers' decisions to engage in green purchase behavior (BB). Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H4.** *The relationship between EV and BB is mediated by APGP.*

Furthermore, based on the recent literature, we propose hypotheses that incorporate the mediating role of RGC in the relationships between FV, CV, SV, EV, and BB. These hypotheses are informed by the understanding that consumers' responsiveness to green communication influences their attitudes toward green products, which in turn affects their

purchase behavior. In their proposal for a new model of green consumer behavior, Do Paco et al. [12] identified the fact that responsiveness to green communication statistically influences purchase behavior, but this influence is below the minimum value of 0.2, therefore indicating that responsiveness to green communication is not relevant. However, our research instead considers the mediating role of RGC in the relationship between FV, CV, SV, EV, and BB. The rationale behind approaching RGC as a mediator will be explained in more detail below.

Consumer perception of the functional benefits and environmental value of green products [9,28] may be influenced by their receptivity to green communication (RGC), which refers to the positive response of consumers to green marketing communication [53]. This, in turn, affects their decision-making process towards green purchase behavior (BB). Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H5.** *The relationship between FV and BB is mediated by RGC.*

Conditions such as discounts and availability [32,44] might be communicated through green marketing efforts. Consumers who are receptive to such messages (RGC) are more likely to consider these factors when making green purchase decisions (BB). Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H6.** *The relationship between CV and BB is mediated by RGC.*

Consumers' perceptions of the social benefits associated with green products [34,45] might be reinforced through green communication efforts. RGC could mediate how these social values translate into actual green purchase behavior (BB). Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H7.** *The relationship between SV and BB is mediated by RGC.*

Emotional satisfaction derived from purchasing green products [36,43] may be influenced by how green communication evokes emotions related to sustainability. RGC serves as a mediator, linking emotional value (EV) with green buying behavior (BB). Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H8.** *The relationship between EV and BB is mediated by RGC.*

Overall, the literature review underscores the significant influence of GPV on consumer behavior toward green products. GPV, which encompasses various dimensions, shapes consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. In particular, consumers perceive green products to offer tangible and intangible benefits, which affects their willingness to pay a premium and their purchasing decisions. The mediating roles of APGP and RGC expand the research avenue in consumer choices for environmentally friendly products. Our hypotheses propose that APGP and RGC mediate the relationships between GPV dimensions and BB, emphasizing the importance of consumers' attitudes and responsiveness to green messaging in their green purchase behavior. This forms the foundation for further exploration in our subsequent research.

### 3. Methods

Data for this investigation were acquired through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was meticulously crafted not only to collect information relevant to the validation of the proposed hypotheses but also to familiarize the respondents with the study theme. The constructs, their elements, the content, and the references used to determine the scales are presented in Appendix A.

The questionnaire was built on the Google Forms platform, renowned for its user-friendly interface that facilitates the creation of clear and concise questions and response choices. The digital dissemination of the questionnaire occurred between January 15 and

February 23 2024, through a shared access link via Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. The criterion for participant selection was at least one previous purchase of an eco-friendly product (as defined in the literature review section). On completion of the survey, 200 complete and valid responses were compiled. The sample structure is presented in Table 1. The sample structure reflects a diverse representation across different age groups and educational levels. Most of the respondents, 49.5%, were in the 20–24 age range, indicating a significant portion of the younger participants. Regarding the gender distribution, women represented 59.4% of the sample, showing a slight gender imbalance. In terms of education, the highest proportion of respondents, 52.0%, had a bachelor’s degree, followed by 27.5% with a master’s degree and 10.7% with a doctorate. This varied educational background suggests a diverse range of perspectives within the sample, which enhances the robustness of the study findings.

**Table 1.** Study sample structure.

Age Group	Frequency	Gender	Frequency	Education Level	Frequency
20–24	49.5%	Female	59.4%	High School	9.8%
25–29	13.0%	Male	40.6%	Bachelor’s Degree	52.0%
30–34	10.4%			Master’s Degree	27.5%
35–39	3.9%			Doctorate	10.7%
40+	23.1%				

The study strictly adhered to robust ethical procedures throughout data collection and handling. As the research collected information from participants in Romania through a quantitative survey form, participants were provided with an information letter, which they received and read. They were also given the chance to ask any questions regarding the study and were assured of their right to withdraw at any point. It was ensured that they comprehended the overall objectives, potential risks, and methodologies involved in the research. Also, before responding to the questionnaire, participants were informed that the data collected will be used only for the purposes of this research project. Their consent, expressed by completing the questionnaire, granted the research team permission to collect and use the information for scientific study. Maintaining the utmost confidentiality, measures are in place to safeguard participants’ privacy, ensuring that no individual’s identity will be disclosed in any document.

The primary analytical instrument used in this study was the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Esteemed for its robustness, PLS-SEM is capable of analyzing complex interrelations among multiple observed variables simultaneously. This method is particularly suited to our research due to its ability to handle sophisticated models with numerous mediators and its compatibility with both formative and reflective constructs [56]. The choice of PLS-SEM was informed by several factors: its component-based nature allows for the modeling of complex relationships between observed and latent variables; its tolerance for non-normality, which aligns with our data characteristics; and its efficacy with small to medium sample sizes, typical of social science research. The analysis was carried out using SmartPLS version 4.0.9.6.

To address the potential for common-method bias (CMB), which can arise when the same method is used to measure different constructs within a study, several strategies were employed. These included ensuring anonymity to reduce social desirability bias and implementing reverse-coded items to minimize acceptance bias. Moreover, temporal separation between measurements of different constructs was employed [57] by measuring predictor variables between 15 and 31 January 2024 and the outcome variables between 1 and 23 February 2024. Additionally, the use of the Harman single-factor test and a marker variable technique was applied to assess and control for any variance in the method. The results indicated that no single factor accounted for most of the variance. Specifically, the

total variance explained by one factor did not exceed the threshold of 50%, suggesting that common-method bias is not a significant concern in our data set. These measures are in line with recommended practices to mitigate CMB and enhance the validity of survey-based research findings.

#### 4. Results

Table 2 illustrates the robustness and precision of the indicators used for the various constructs in our study. The loadings in the table denote the strength of the relationship between each indicator and its corresponding construct. A higher loading value indicates a stronger relationship, with a set threshold of 0.7 [58], which all indicators surpass. This suggests satisfying the reliability of the indicator.

**Table 2.** Construct reliability and validity measures for the indicators used in the study.

Construct	Indicator	Construct	Loadings
Attitudes toward Purchasing Green Products (APGP)	APGP_1	Attitudes toward Purchasing Green Products (APGP)—( $\alpha = 0.892$ ; $\rho_a = 0.957$ ; $\rho_c = 0.962$ ; AVE = 0.652)	0.847
	APGP_2		0.844
	APGP_3		0.823
	APGP_4		0.855
	APGP_5		0.787
	APGP_6		0.774
Receptivity to Green Communication (RGC)	RGC_1	Receptivity to Green Communication (RGC)—( $\alpha = 0.955$ ; $\rho_a = 0.899$ ; $\rho_c = 0.918$ ; AVE = 0.737)	0.786
	RGC_2		0.891
	RGC_3		0.824
	RGC_4		0.910
	RGC_5		0.915
	RGC_6		0.856
	RGC_7		0.859
	RGC_8		0.818
	RGC_9		0.860
Buying Behavior (BB)	BB_1	Buying Behavior (BB)—( $\alpha = 0.918$ ; $\rho_a = 0.931$ ; $\rho_c = 0.933$ ; AVE = 0.585)	0.776
	BB_2		0.781
	BB_3		0.807
	BB_4		0.838
	BB_5		0.817
	BB_6		0.837
	BB_7		0.894
	BB_8		0.747
	BB_9		0.816
	BB_10		0.859
Functional Value (FV)	FV_1	Functional Value (FV)—( $\alpha = 0.850$ ; $\rho_a = 0.859$ ; $\rho_c = 0.893$ ; AVE = 0.627)	0.808
	FV_2		0.742
	FV_3		0.823
	FV_4		0.859
	FV_5		0.718

Table 2. Cont.

Construct	Indicator	Construct	Loadings
Conditional Value (CV)	CV_1	Conditional Value (CV)—( $\alpha = 0.873$ ; $\rho_{a} = 0.902$ ; $\rho_{c} = 0.912$ ; AVE = 0.722)	0.821
	CV_2		0.834
	CV_3		0.910
	CV_4		0.830
Social Value (SV)	SV_1	Social Value (SV)—( $\alpha = 0.931$ ; $\rho_{a} = 0.939$ ; $\rho_{c} = 0.948$ ; AVE = 0.784)	0.828
	SV_2		0.905
	SV_3		0.909
	SV_4		0.892
	SV_5		0.889
Emotional Value (EV)	EV_1	Emotional Value (EV)—( $\alpha = 0.936$ ; $\rho_{a} = 0.939$ ; $\rho_{c} = 0.950$ ; AVE = 0.759)	0.871
	EV_2		0.919
	EV_3		0.894
	EV_4		0.878
	EV_5		0.836
	EV_6		0.825

Note:  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's Alpha; AVE—Average Variance Extracted;  $\rho_{c}$ —composite reliability.

The table also presents several measures of reliability and validity for each construct: Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ),  $\rho_{a}$ ,  $\rho_{c}$ , and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7 are generally considered acceptable [59], and all the constructs listed in the table exceed this threshold, indicating high reliability. Similarly,  $\rho_{a}$  and  $\rho_{c}$ , measures of composite reliability, also exceed the 0.7 benchmark for all constructs, further confirming their reliability.

AVE, a measure that indicates the proportion of variance captured by the construct relative to the measurement error, is considered strong if it exceeds 0.5 [60]. In this table, all the constructs used for this investigation show AVE values greater than 0.5, demonstrating solid convergent validity.

To further assess the validity of the measurement model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted using the indicators for each construct. The factor loadings presented in Table 2 indicate the strength of the relationship between the latent constructs and their respective indicators. A check for potential cross-loadings was performed by examining the differences between the first and second loadings for each indicator. A difference of less than 0.2 suggests potential cross-loadings [61]. The results indicated that for most indicators, the differences were greater than 0.2, indicating that there were no significant cross-loads. However, some indicators showed differences close to 0.2, including APGP\_1 and APGP\_2 (0.003), BB\_1 and BB\_2 (−0.005), CV\_1 and CV\_2 (−0.013), and EV\_1 and EV\_2 (−0.048). Accounting for the fact that these indicators were used in previous studies [11,12] and they are important for the theory and the interpretability of the constructs, we considered that these small differences do not significantly impact the overall model, but they are noted for transparency in the analysis.

Table 3 offers an evaluation of the discriminant validity of the constructs, employing the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the Fornell–Larcker criterion as benchmarks.

**Table 3.** Evaluation of construct discriminant validity.

HTMT Ratio							
Constructs	APGP	BB	CV	EV	FV	RGC	SV
APGP							
BB	0.757						
CV	0.513	0.398					
EV	0.791	0.745	0.448				
FV	0.790	0.692	0.514	0.774			
RGC	0.788	0.685	0.425	0.708	0.788		
SV	0.518	0.482	0.165	0.629	0.636	0.486	
Fornell–Larcker Criterion							
Constructs	APGP	BB	CV	EV	FV	RGC	SV
APGP	0.807						
BB	0.696	0.765					
CV	0.463	0.358	0.850				
EV	0.717	0.692	0.416	0.871			
FV	0.701	0.621	0.466	0.702	0.792		
RGC	0.731	0.647	0.403	0.674	0.719	0.859	
SV	0.476	0.445	0.160	0.588	0.570	0.471	0.885

For the HTMT ratio values, a standard cutoff of 0.85 is typically used to determine discriminant validity, with values below this indicating a clear distinction between valid and invalid pairs of latent variables [62]. The HTMT ratio values listed in Table 3 fall below this cutoff, suggesting robust discriminant validity.

The Fornell–Larcker criterion posits that the square root of the AVE of a construct should surpass the correlation with any other construct [63]. In Table 3, the diagonal entries under the Fornell–Larcker section denote the square roots of the AVE for each construct. These figures exceed the off-diagonal correlations, further confirming the discriminant validity of the constructs.

An in-depth analysis of the structural model was performed to assess concerns of collinearity and its predictive efficiency. Given that the variance inflation factor (VIF) scores for each variable were significantly below the threshold of 3, the possibility of collinearity was considered minimal.

Figure 1 illustrates the result of the structural model. It is observed that 57.5% of the variance in RGC can be explained by FV, CV, SV, and EV, as the R-square value is 0.575. Furthermore, 74.0% of the variance in APGP can be explained by the same constructs along with RGC, as can be observed from the R-square value of 0.740. Finally, 52.5% of the variance in BB can be explained by RGC and APGP with an R-square value of 0.525.

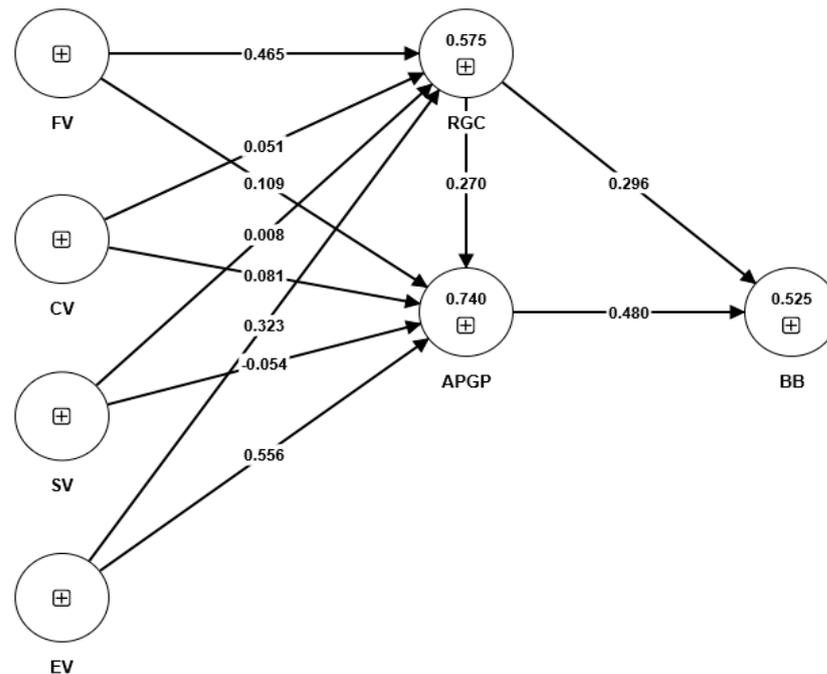


Figure 1. The structural model.

## 5. Discussion

The study analyzes the relationship between green consumer values—FV, CV, SV, EV—and their influence on BB among Romanian consumers. Through an analysis of survey data and employing PLS-SEM, the research aimed to uncover the mediating roles of APGP and RGC. The findings revealed a nuanced picture of supported and unsupported hypotheses about the mediation effects on the connection between consumer values and buying behavior. Table 4 presents the results of the test of eight hypotheses (H1 to H8) on the relationships between the research variables.

Table 4. Indirect effects for hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses	Relationships	Beta Coef.	SD	T Statistics	Decision	Type of Mediation
H1	FV → BB (de)	0.250 **	0.048	5.174	Not supported	Direct effect only (No mediation)
	FV → APGP → BB (ie)	0.052	0.035	1.516		
H2	CV → BB (de)	0.060	0.036	1.689	Not supported	No effect (No mediation)
	CV → APGP → BB (ie)	0.039	0.023	1.689		
H3	SV → BB (de)	−0.023	0.033	0.674	Not supported	No effect (No mediation)
	SV → APGP → BB (ie)	−0.026	0.022	1.156		
H4	EV → BB (de)	0.404 **	0.055	7.336	Supported	Complementary (Partial mediation)
	EV → APGP → BB (ie)	0.267 **	0.051	5.190		
H5	FV → RGC → BB (ie)	0.137 *	0.044	3.125	Supported	Complementary (Partial mediation)
H6	CV → BB (de)	0.060	0.036	1.689	Not supported	No effect (No mediation)
	CV → RGC → BB (ie)	0.015	0.017	0.886		
H7	SV → BB (de)	−0.023	0.033	0.674	Not supported	No effect (No mediation)
	SV → RGC → BB (ie)	0.002	0.019	0.123		
H8	EV → BB (de)	0.404 **	0.055	7.336	Supported	Complementary (Partial mediation)
	EV → RGC → BB (ie)	0.095 *	0.033	2.902		

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; de—direct effect, ie, that is, indirect effect; SD—standard deviation.

Empirical analysis conducted on the proposed hypotheses has yielded a mix of supported and unsupported claims about the mediation effects on the relationship between consumer values and buying behavior.

The direct effect of FV on BB was significant, but the indirect effect through APGP was not, suggesting that APGP does not mediate the relationship between FV and BB and that consumers' functional value perceptions influence their buying behavior independently of their attitudes toward green products.

The direct and indirect effects of CV and SV on BB through both APGP and RGC were not significant, indicating that neither APGP nor RGC mediate the relationships between CV, SV, and BB. This suggests that neither conditional nor social values have a significant indirect impact on buying behavior through attitudes toward green products or receptivity to green communication.

Both direct and indirect effects of EV and FV on BB through APGP and RGC were significant, suggesting a partial mediation, where both direct path and path through the mediator (APGP and RGC) are significant. Similarly to H4 and H5, both direct and indirect effects of EV on BB through RGC were significant, indicating partial mediation. Therefore, the results suggest that APGP and RGC partially mediate the effects of EV and FV on BB but do not mediate the effects of CV and SV on BB.

Previous research [11] presented a model that demonstrates the significant influence of GPV on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions for green products. Their findings align with the broader literature [22,23,26], confirming that functional, conditional, social, and emotional values that construct GPV are key determinants of consumer attitudes towards green products, which in turn significantly affect purchase intentions. When comparing these findings with the results of our research, we observe some parallels and divergences. Woo and Kim [11] found a strong effect of FV on consumer attitudes, which is consistent with the significant direct effect of FV on buying behavior in this study, as both studies underscore the importance of tangible benefits in influencing consumer decisions. Furthermore, the significant direct and indirect effects of EV on BB and APGP in our results are consistent with previous research [11]. This suggests that emotional factors play a decisive role in green purchasing behaviors. However, factors such as CV and SV were found to have no impact in our investigation compared to Woo and Kim [11]. These discrepancies might suggest that while CV influences attitudes, it may not strongly influence purchasing behavior through the mediating constructs in our model. Additionally, the results imply that social factors can influence attitudes but do not necessarily translate into actual purchasing behavior in the context of our research. Additionally, this finding indicates that factors beyond the scope of this study could have a more pronounced influence on the green purchasing decisions, such as personal preferences, product availability, or competing priorities. Moreover, the rejection of these hypotheses suggests that CV and SV, while influential in other contexts, do not directly translate into green purchase behavior in the Romanian market.

Furthermore, in our study, RGC has a significant total effect on BB, which is higher than the effect indicated by Do Paco et al. [12]. This suggests that, in our context, receptivity to green communication plays a more substantial role in influencing buying behavior.

This study enriches the existing literature on green consumer behavior by offering a nuanced examination of the mediating roles of APGP and RGC in the relationship between consumer values and BB. Thus, the research contributes novel insights into several key areas.

Unlike previous studies that often aggregate green values into broader categories, our study dissects them into distinct constructs: functional value (FV), emotional value (EV), conditional value (CV), and social value (SV). This granular approach allows for a more detailed understanding of how each value uniquely influences consumer behavior.

In addition, we extend the conversation around green marketing by highlighting the significant mediating role of RGC. Our findings suggest that RGC is not just a channel of

influence but a powerful force in shaping consumer behavior, more so than indicated in prior research [12].

By demonstrating that the impact of CV and SV on BB is not significant, our study suggests that the influence of these values may be context dependent. This adds a new dimension to the conversation initiated by Woo and Kim [11], proposing that the effectiveness of these values in driving green behavior may vary across different cultural and market contexts. Our research corroborates and expands on the findings of Woo and Kim [11] by not only confirming the importance of EV but also quantifying its direct and indirect effects on BB. This dual path influence underscores the complex interplay between emotional engagement and green purchasing decisions.

By exploring the direct effects of green values on BB, our study offers a counterpoint to the findings of Mazar and Zhong [64], who observed a paradoxical relationship between green product consumption and prosocial behavior. Our results suggest that green values can have a straightforward and positive influence on BB, challenging the notion of a paradox in green consumerism.

Echoing the concerns of White et al. [65], our study addresses the elusive green consumer by examining the gap between stated preferences and actual purchasing behavior. By identifying the mediating factors that bridge this gap, we provide actionable insights for marketers to better align green marketing strategies with consumer behavior. FV is found to be of key importance, as it encapsulates the consumer's perception that green products are economically sensible, reasonably priced, and effective in mitigating environmental impact while maintaining quality standards. This value proposition is crucial when consumers weigh green products against their non-green counterparts, especially when product qualities are analogous. In addition, EV emerges from the personal gratification and tranquility consumers experience through green purchases, which enhances their sense of well-being and fulfillment by contributing to environmental conservation. This emotional involvement is a powerful driver that can transform environmental concern into tangible consumer action.

According to the emphasis of Yalley and Twum [66] on green consumer behavior in emerging economies, our study suggests that factors that influence green purchasing decisions may differ significantly in these markets. Our findings encourage marketers to consider local values and communication strategies when promoting green products in emerging economies.

## 6. Conclusions

### 6.1. Summary of Theoretical Implications

The findings of this research contribute to the theoretical understanding of green consumer behavior in several ways. By dissecting green values into distinct constructs, this study offers a refined theoretical framework that can be used to better understand the specific drivers of green purchasing behavior. This granularity allows for more targeted hypotheses and nuanced theoretical models in future research.

Furthermore, the significant mediating role of RGC identified in this study suggests the need to revise existing theories on green marketing communication. It calls for a theoretical expansion that takes into account the persuasive power of green communication beyond its traditional role as a mere message conduit.

The lack of significant effects of CV and SV on BB challenges the universality of the influence of these constructs in different contexts. This finding invites theoretical exploration of the situational factors that can moderate the impact of these values on consumer behavior. Furthermore, the dual-path influence of EV on BB, both direct and mediated, underscores the complex interplay between emotional engagement and consumer decision-making. This contributes to the theoretical discourse on the role of emotions in ethical consumption.

By identifying the mediating factors that bridge the gap between stated preferences and actual purchasing behavior, this study contributes to a theoretical understanding of how to better predict consumer behavior in the realm of sustainability. First, the attitude

toward purchasing green products reflects the consumer's belief in the intrinsic value of green products, viewing them as a positive and beneficial choice. A pro-environmental stance, coupled with a willingness to invest more in eco-friendly producers, indicates that price is not the sole deciding factor. Second, the endorsement of brands that advocate for environmental causes and their attention to green advertising messages suggest a change in attitudes influenced by green marketing. Positive reactions to green-branded messages underscore the importance of integrating environmental themes into advertising strategies.

### 6.2. Summary of Practical Implications

For practitioners, the insights from this study offer several actionable strategies. First, marketers must develop communications that resonate with the specific values that drive green purchasing behavior. Messages should be tailored to highlight the functional and emotional benefits of green products.

Given the mediating role of RGC, marketers should invest in green communication strategies that not only inform but also persuade and engage consumers on an emotional level. Additionally, products must be positioned to emphasize their functional and emotional value, leveraging these as key selling points to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers.

Marketers should be aware of the cultural and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of different consumer values. Strategies must be adapted to local contexts, especially in emerging markets. Finally, companies must focus on reducing the intention-behavior gap by aligning their marketing strategies with the mediating factors identified in this study, such as enhancing the perceived value and credibility of green communication. By highlighting these results, our study provides a lens through which the elusive green consumer becomes more discernible, allowing marketers to craft strategies that resonate with the values and attitudes driving green purchasing behaviors.

### 6.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this study contributes valuable information on green consumer behavior, it is not without limitations. One notable limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which can introduce response bias and social desirability bias. Future research could benefit from employing more diverse and objective measures, such as observational studies or experimental designs. Furthermore, this study focused on a specific demographic and cultural context, which can limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should aim to explore the behavior of green consumers in various demographic groups and cultural contexts and also examine the intersection of financial constraints and green purchasing behavior to provide a more complete understanding.

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### Appendix A. Research Constructs and Indicators

Construct	Indicator	Content	References
Attitude toward Purchasing Green Products (APGP)	APGP_1	I consider purchasing green products to be a valuable behavior.	[11,38]
	APGP_2	I view purchasing green products as a positive behavior.	
	APGP_3	I believe purchasing green products is a beneficial behavior.	
	APGP_4	I choose to buy products that are environmentally friendly.	
	APGP_5	I am willing to pay more for a product if I know that its producer is environmentally friendly.	
	APGP_6	Price is not the most important criterion for me when purchasing products.	
Receptivity to Green Communication (RGC)	RGC_1	I endorse brands that advocate for environmental causes.	[12]
	RGC_2	I tend to give heed to advertising messages that address environmental issues.	
	RGC_3	The inclusion of green messages in advertisements influences my attitude toward those ads.	
	RGC_4	I react positively to brands that incorporate green messages in their advertising.	
	RGC_5	I am the type of consumer who responds favorably when brands utilize green messages in their ads.	
	RGC_6	I believe that green advertising holds value.	
	RGC_7	I consider green advertising to be an essential form of promotion.	
	RGC_8	I am the type of consumer who is open to purchasing products marketed as environmentally friendly.	
	RGC_9	I tend to pay attention to messages in green advertising.	
Buying Behavior (BB)	BB_1	I make an effort to purchase energy-efficient products and appliances.	[12,67]
	BB_2	I steer clear of products with excessive packaging.	
	BB_3	When there is a choice, I opt for the product that minimizes pollution.	
	BB_4	I have switched products or brands for ecological reasons.	
	BB_5	I go to great lengths to buy paper products crafted from recycled paper.	
	BB_6	I use environmentally friendly soaps and detergents.	
	BB_7	I have persuaded members of my family or friends not to purchase certain products harmful to the environment.	
	BB_8	Whenever possible, I opt for products packaged in reusable containers.	
	BB_9	I make an effort to buy products that can be recycled.	
	BB_10	I purchase high-efficiency light bulbs to conserve energy.	

Construct	Indicator	Content	References
Functional Value (FV)	FV_1	Purchasing a green product offers good value for money.	[11,68]
	FV_2	Green products are reasonably priced.	
	FV_3	Green products are well-made for reducing environmental distortion.	
	FV_4	Green products maintain an acceptable standard of quality.	
	FV_5	I prefer green products over non-green products when their product qualities are similar.	
Conditional Value (CV)	CV_1	I would be inclined to purchase a green product if offered at a discount.	[11,68]
	CV_2	I would consider purchasing a green product if offered with promotional incentives.	
	CV_3	I would opt for a green product when it is readily available.	
	CV_4	The price for green products should be appropriate in relation to the value for money.	
Social Value (SV)	SV_1	Purchasing a green product would create a positive impression on others.	[11]
	SV_2	Buying a green product would enhance how I am perceived by others.	
	SV_3	Choosing a green product would contribute to feeling accepted by others.	
	SV_4	Opting for a green product would provide me with social approval.	
	SV_5	Supporting environmental issues makes me more socially attractive	
Emotional Value (EV)	EV_1	I derive enjoyment from purchasing green products.	[11,68]
	EV_2	I feel relaxed after making a green product purchase.	
	EV_3	The purchase of green products brings me a sense of well-being.	
	EV_4	Supporting environmental protection makes me feel meaningful.	
	EV_5	I would say I am emotionally involved in environmental protection issues.	
	EV_6	Supporting environmental protection makes me feel special.	

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