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The Influence of High–Low Power on Green Consumption: The Moderating Effect of Impression Management Motivation

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Abstract: The importance of sustainable development has reached a consensus. Green consumption, as the final link of consumer behavior, can help green production activities make a real difference and achieve sustainable development. Based on the Agentic–Communal Model, this paper explores the relationship between power and green consumption through three experiments. The results showed that low-power (vs. high-power) consumers, who are more dependent on others, are likely to facilitate and encourage a communal orientation towards one's environment. These consumers pay more attention to others and may have a preference for green consumption. Self-concern plays a mediating role in this mechanism. However, when individuals have a strong impression management motivation, the difference in their willingness toward green consumption will disappear. In other words, both lower-power and high-power consumers are more willing to purchase green products. This paper helps to deepen the understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying green consumption and also provides practical implications for firms' green marketing strategies.

Keywords: power; green consumption; self-concern; impression management motivation

1. Introduction

As academics and industry attach increasing importance to the necessity of sustainable development [1], research and practice also show that green products can promote environmental sustainability. Today, many scholars and firms are committed to energy conservation. For example, Exxon Mobil uses "energy and technology" as one of the three tabs on its home page and improved its technology as much as possible to save energy [2]. However, Tesla Motors, a firm that manufactures electric automobiles to protect the environment, had poor sales performance in 2014 [3]. Therefore, the role of green products in promoting sustainability is not only related to the product itself, but also to marketing and consumption. Blok et al. [4] also proposed that only by linking green production and green consumption can we further promote sustainable development. Green consumption is often described as a kind of consumption behavior that takes the protection of the ecological environment into account during the processes of purchase, use, and disposal [5]. This behavior has the aim of minimizing the damage that an individual's consumption has on the environment [6].

Green consumption is related to consumers, and different consumers have different characteristics. In order to promote green consumption, it is a key for firms to understand consumer characteristics and adopt corresponding marketing strategies. Previous research on consumer characteristics and green consumption has mainly focused on demographics and psychology [7–9]. As psychological processes often involve environmental decisions and behaviors, psychology plays a significant role in environmental sustainable development [10].

In recent years, exploring green consumption to promote environmental sustainability from sociopsychological perspectives has become a major focus of scholars. Previous research has focused

on psychological norms, green concepts, and value perceptions. For example, moral identity [5,11], subjective norms [12,13], and public situation [14] have had significant influences on green consumption. Consumers with higher environmental concerns [15,16], higher perceived consumer effectiveness [17], and higher green consumer values [18] have positive preferences toward green consumption. At the same time, the scarcity and waste of resources are important reasons to restrict the environment and sustainability. However, only a limited amount of research has explored green consumption from the perspective of resource perception. High–low power, furthermore, is different based on an individual's perception of controlling resources [19]. In addition, power, which widely exists in daily life [19], has primarily been discussed in the fields of consumer psychology [20,21], consumer behavior [22,23], etc. [24,25]. How power plays a role in the field of green consumption still requires further research. Does power, a common psychological factor that differs in the way it controls resources, has an effect on green consumption?

In order to fill this research gap, the current study, based on the Agentic–Communal Model [19], attempts to explore the effect of power on green consumption and explain its mediating mechanisms and boundary conditions. Furthermore, this paper contributes to extending the Agentic–Communal Model to the field of green consumption. By introducing power, this study also enriches the research on the underlying psychological mechanisms green consumption and marketing.

2. Theory and Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The Agentic–Communal Model [19] explains how power shapes and guides consumer behavior by highlighting the dual orientations of agency and communion. This model shows that high-power individuals have a stronger perception of resource control. It is easy for high-power individuals to facilitate agentic orientation, causing individuals to pay more attention to self-expression and self-promotion. Individuals with low power, in contrast, need to rely on others for valuable resources to promote communal orientation. Thus, they are more likely to pay more attention to their relationship with others and take others' feelings into consideration. Abele and Wojciszke [26] further discovered that agency refers to a desire for independence, a focus on competence and achievement, and valuing the individual self as paramount. In contrast, communion refers to a desire to connect with others, a focus on warmth in relationships, and the prime importance of valuing others. Theories on power have created great value in the field of consumer behavior research in recent years. The proposed model has been used to interpret the internal mechanism of the perception of unfair prices [21], the influence of power on compensatory consumption behavior [27], and other consumer behavior. Rucker and Galinsky [28] also examined the implications of the Agentic–Communal Model of power across three distinct domains of consumer behavior: gift-giving, persuasion, and consumer misconduct.

2.2. Literature Review on Green Consumption and Power

It has become an important task for the world to reduce energy consumption and protect the environment [29]. Therefore, in addition to the government, nongovernmental organizations, and firms, consumers also shoulder the responsibility to protect the environment and its resources [30,31]. With the necessity of green consumption being widely acknowledged [32], consumers are encouraged to engage in green consumption [33]. Green consumption is beneficial to the environment and has socially shared meaning [34]. Consequently, green consumption, as an effective way to promote the sustainable development of the environment and society, has always been the focus of academic attention. Sustainability research on green consumption has evolved from discussing the characteristics of green consumers [35] (for example, altruists [36] and family habits [37]) to examining the factors that influence green consumption, such as moral identity [12], concepts of civic sustainability [38], and green advertising [39]. The realization of significant sustainable progress requires not only the

development of new products and alternative products [40] but also customer acceptance of sustainable products and services, to consider green consumption as a normal consumption behavior [41].

Prior research has focused on the effects of various factors on green consumption, which can be categorized into four categories: demographics, products, psychology, and external intervention factors. Demographic factors refer to gender, age, and income. Awan and Abbasi [42] examined how demographic factors, for example, gender, income, and occupation, affect environmental awareness and consumption behaviors. Product factors involve price, brand, and green advertising [39]. Yang et al. [3] found that abstract advertising appeal is more effective in promoting green consumption than concrete advertising appeal in situations where the benefits of green products relay to others. Psychological factors mainly include social norms [11], environmental concern [43], perceived values [12], perceived consumer effectiveness [17], and green consumer values [18]. Verplanken and Holland [44] claimed that environmental protection values will strengthen customers' attention to the information related to environmental protection and then increase more green consumption. Perceived consumer effectiveness also has a significant positive impact on pro-environment behavior [17]. External intervention factors refer to the influence of the government [45], media, and other third parties on green consumption.

Power refers to an individual's perceived ability to control others, which is often achieved by providing or refusing to provide valuable resources [46]. In psychology, the object of power research is the sense of power rather than real power. Compared with the actual power possessed by an individual, the sense of power has a greater impact on individual behaviors [47]. Power is one of the most common psychological forces in social life, and its individual differences widely exist in people's daily lives [20]. Individual differences, furthermore, have a profound impact on various aspects of emotion, cognition, behavior, and decision-making, making power a very important research topic in recent years [48]. In the field of consumer research, these differences are reflected in consumers' psychological perceptions [20,21], values [18], behaviors [22,23], and their information processing and persuasion [24,25,49]. In the field of consumer behavior, furthermore, scholars have done significant research. For example, in terms of compensatory consumption behavior, consumers with a low (vs. high) power desire to purchase status-related products [50,51] and large-sized products [27]. In terms of brand switching behavior, Dubois et al. [27] found that high- (vs. low) power consumers will have more frequent brand switching behaviors. Surprisingly, there is little research on green consumption behavior.

3. Hypotheses Development

3.1. The Effect of Power on Green Consumption

The Agentic–Communal Model [19] explains how power shapes consumer values and behaviors. This model holds the view that high-power individuals are less dependent on others, which facilitates an agentic orientation. Individuals with low-power are more likely to rely on others for valuable resources, which encourages a communal orientation towards their environment. With different trait orientations, individuals may have different behaviors in three ways. Firstly, high-power individuals have an intense sense of controlling valued resources [19] and are less influenced by social interventions and restrictions. Consequently, social norms fail to regulate behavior. Low-power individuals have less access to resources and are more easily restricted by society. Thus, they are more likely to behave in accordance with social norms [46], such as green consumption. Secondly, individuals with high power are more dependent on their own thoughts and beliefs [24], making them more unlikely to be persuaded by the information of the external environment. As a consequence, these traits may encourage self-interested product preferences. Since individuals with low power pay more attention to the external environment and information, they are more inclined to choose products with altruistic appeals [52], such as green products. Thirdly, considering that the benefits of green consumption are not only for consumers themselves but also for other consumers, society, and the earth, consumers who embrace green consumption can be seen as more focused on group interests [53]. Moreover, those

who reject green consumption are more likely to choose personal interests over group interests, to a certain degree. Low-power individuals who are concerned with group interests may prefer altruistic green products. Taken together, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1. *Low-power (vs. high-power) consumers are more likely to indicate a preference for green consumption.*

3.2. The Mediation Role of Self-concern

Self-concern refers to the focus of individual attention [54]. Individuals can be classified into having high self-concern or low self-concern. Having high self-concern indicates that one is more focused on oneself and pays more attention to his or her own thoughts and emotions, while having low self-concern is indicative that one pays more attention to others or the external environment [55]. On the one hand, self-concern can also reflect people's psychological characteristics. According to a study by Eberly-Lewis, self-concern is closely related to the narcissistic psychology of teenagers [56]. On the other hand, self-concern also affects individual behavior and other aspects. It can be seen that self-concern, as a basic cognitive variable, does not only reflect an individual's internal focus, it also does well in predicting the individual's follow-up behavior. Namely, it has both reflective and functional characteristics [55], which play an important role in reflecting differences in power and in forecasting attitudes towards green consumption. The Agentic–Communal Model shows that differences in power would develop a psychological tendency to focus on themselves or others [52], and the influence of power on self-concern act on consumption behavior. High-power states prompt an agentic orientation, which tends to be more self-concerned. Consumers care more about their own feelings and behave according to their own willingness. They focus on the satisfaction of self-efficacy and pay more attention to the function and quality of products, in order to meet their personal interests [50]. Therefore, it is difficult for these consumers to have a positive response to green consumption, which would indicate a relationship-orientation. On the contrary, a communal orientation with low-power means an enhanced sensitivity toward others and a greater concern for the needs of relationships [19]. In order to meet the needs of relationships, these consumers will be more generous and pro-social and thus prefer green consumption, which can prompt other-oriented and relationship-oriented perspectives. To summarize, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2. *The effect of power on green consumption is driven by self-concern, such that an increase in power corresponds with an increase in self-concern, which in turn augments green consumption.*

3.3. Moderating Effect of Impression Management Motivation

High-power individuals are less influenced by social norms and often regard other individuals as a means of achieving personal goals due to the focus of the achievement of their own goals [57]. As a consequence, when high-power individuals realize that their attention toward others and the environment are beneficial for achieving their targets, these individuals reverse their behavior.

Interpersonal expectation theory believes that people will choose appropriate behaviors in the process of interpersonal communication to engage in impression management, so as to achieve their ultimate goals [58]. Research on impression management suggests that people are likely to be motivated to make a positive impression on others [59]. In this case, high-power individuals may engage in prosocial behavior. The two-component model of impression management [60] demonstrates that impression management involves two components: impression motivation and impression construction, both of which have been discussed in consumer research [61]. Impression motivation refers to the psychological motivation to maintain a positive impression and avoid a negative impression [62]. Impression motivation is associated with psychological factors, while impression construction is associated with real behaviors. Thus, we want to explore how impression management motivation influences the effect of power on green consumption.

Each individual has impression management motivation to some extent, but this value varies in degree with the influence of personality characteristics and situational factors [63,64]. When one's impression management motivation is prominent, social motivation takes the dominant position. With a particular goal activated, high-power consumers are more likely to be persuaded by information [65]. In this case, individuals with either high or low power will make the effort to enhance their prosocial attributes, which will lead to low self-concern and more attention to the interests of others and the social environment. Thus, more prosocial behaviors, such as green consumption, will be promoted. When a consumer's impression management motivation is weak, individuals with high-power will not have strong relationship demands. This is because of their lack of concern for social image determined by their behaviors. In this case, individual motivation is dominant [66], which would result in high self-concern and a preference for products to satisfy personal interests, resulting in less engagement with green consumption. In contrast, individuals with low-power lack the perception that they have control over valuable resources and are more sensitive to the evaluation of others [46], which will result in low self-concern and a preference for the prosocial attributes of products. Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3a. *The effect of high-low power on green consumption is attenuated when consumers have a strong impression management motivation.*

H3b. *Low-power (vs. high-power) consumers have a greater preference for green consumption when consumers have a weak impression management motivation.*

Taken above hypotheses together, we propose the following model (Figure 1):

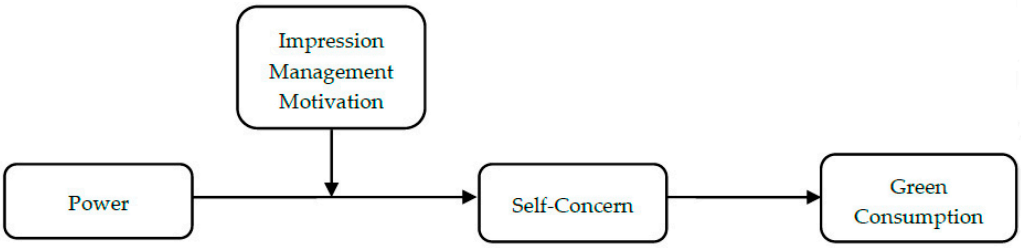

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the current study.

The aim of this study was to explore the assumption that low-power (vs. high-power) individuals have a greater preferences for green consumption. At the same time, this paper also discussed the mediating role of self-concern in this process, as well as the moderating effect of impression management motivation. The relationship of the theoretical model was examined through an experimental approach.

4. Study 1: The Relationship between Power and Green Consumption

The main purpose of Study 1 was to explore the influence of different power on green consumption and test H1.

4.1. Experimental Design and Subject

The study was conducted using a one-way between-subjects experimental design that manipulated the level of power (power: high-power vs. low-power). To avoid potential confounding influences stemming from brand preferences of subjects, we chose virtual products: cleaner S and cleaner E. In addition, this study chose students as subjects for the two following reasons. On the one hand, the samples of most power activation experiments are from students. On the other hand, students have few differences in education, age, and other aspects. Furthermore, using students is a good way to control the potential influence of income. A total of 152 undergraduates from a university in Guangdong province participated in the experiment, and we excluded 13 questionnaires in which participants were not paying attention. Therefore, there were 139 valid questionnaires left (mean

age = 20.56 years; 53 men and 86 women; 69 in the high-power group and 70 in the low-power group). Since demographic information, such as education and income, had no significant influence on the experimental results, it will not be discussed in the subsequent data analysis.

4.2. Procedures

First, participants completed a recall task designed to manipulate their power. They were randomly asked to recall an event that gave them a sense of low-power or high-power [46,50]. Then, participants were asked to reported how they felt about power, such as " In my relationships with others, I think I have a great deal of power" (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) [67]. Next, participants would read a consumption plan of a household cleaner. One was industrial strength cleaner S, which was more powerful and convenient, and the other was a natural cleaner E, which was environmentally-friendly and recyclable. The two products were equal in price (80 RMB) and specification (500 ml/ bottle) [68]. After presenting the product information, there was a question to test whether participants understood the materials correctly: "Which cleaner is the green product?" Furthermore, participants were asked to report their purchase intention, such as "If you need a household cleaner, which of these two products would you buy?" 1 represented the industrial strength cleaner S and 7 represented the natural cleaner E [69]. Finally, participants were asked to report demographic information.

4.3. Results

The multi-item measures were reasonably reliable. In particular, the Cronbach's coefficients of power scale and green consumption scale were 0.82 and 0.94, both of which were greater than the threshold of 0.70. Since scales were adapted from the literature, they had a good aggregation validity and content validity.

4.3.1. Manipulation Check

To check the effectiveness of the power manipulation, we analyzed the data for the following manipulation check items. As expected, the results showed that participants in the "high-power" condition experienced higher power (M = 4.83, SD = 1.08) than did those in the "low-power" condition ((M = 3.79, SD = 1.12), F(1, 137) = 30.89, $p < 0.001$). In addition, in order to judge whether participants understood the material information correctly, we used a one-sample t-test of "environmental protection of products". The results showed that participants could perceive that the natural cleaner E (vs. industrial strength cleaner S) was a green product (M = 5.23 > 4, SD = 1.31, t = 47.09, df = 138, $p < 0.001$).

4.3.2. Hypothesis Testing

The result of the Shapiro–Wilk test showed that the data were normally distributed. To check the equality of variance, we used Levene's Test. The results showed that the total variance of the two groups was homogeneous (t = −4.30, df = 137, $p < 0.001$). In order to test the influence of power on green consumption, a one-way ANOVA was conducted with power (high-power vs. lower-power) as the independent variable, and green consumption as the dependent variable. According to the results of the ANOVA, we found a significant difference in green consumption among these two power conditions (F(1,137) = 18.50, $p < 0.001$). Consistent with H1, the results revealed that participants in the low-power condition (M = 4.43, SD = 1.45) showed significantly stronger willingness to engage in green consumption than those in the high-power condition (M = 3.39, SD = 1.40; see Figure 2).

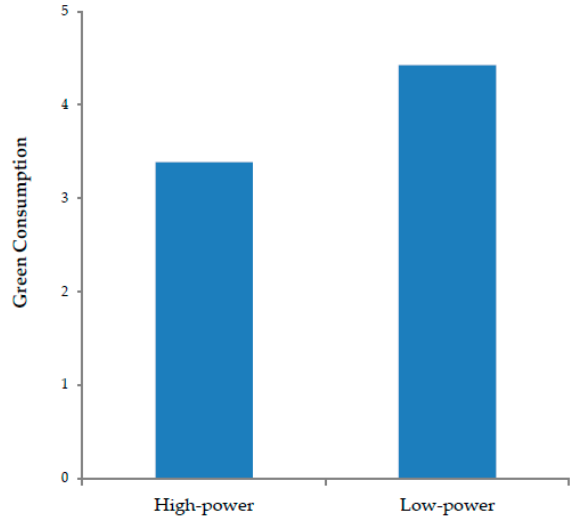

Figure 2. The effect of power on green consumption (Study 1).

5. Study 2: The Mediating Effect of Self-concern

Study 2 had three purposes. Firstly, to improve the validity of the experiment and check the robustness of main effect, we used another sample and another manipulation of power. Second, we explored the mediating effect of self-concern on the relationship between power and green consumption. In addition, in order to test whether the manipulation of power would influence mood and thus affect green consumption, the measurement of mood was added in Study 2.

5.1. Experimental Design and Subject

Like Study 1, this study employed a one-way between-subjects experimental design that contained two power scenarios: high-power and low-power. A total of 138 MBA students were recruited for this study. After excluding eight incomplete questionnaires, 130 valid questionnaires were left (mean age = 22.58 years; 41 men and 89 women; 65 in the high-power group and 65 in the low-power group).

5.2. Procedures

Firstly, to manipulate power, participants were told that there was a group task required to be completed. Then, we randomly assigned everyone a role of leader or follower in the task, as well as the related description of their own roles [51]. Next, referring to the design of Galinsky et al. [46], the participants were asked to report the power they felt on a seven-point Likert rating scale, such as "How much you were in charge of directing the task?" Then, mood was measured with two items ("As for the result of the assigned role, what is your feeling: 1 represents I feel bad/sad, and 7 represents I feel good/happy") [22].

Secondly, we measured the self-concern of participants through the sentence supplementation task [70]. Participants were required to finish five incomplete sentences. Three optional words (e.g., "I", "he", and "we") were provided for the incomplete part of each sentence, and participants were requested to choose one of them to complete the sentence. The total number of first person singular pronouns chosen by the participants for these items served as the summary index of self-concern attention.

Finally, participants reported their product preferences and demographic information. They read the information of the two backpacks, which were equal in price, specification, and producer, but different in material, performance, and style. While the luxurious non-green backpack S had better performance and a more fashionable style, the less luxurious green backpack E was more environmentally-friendly [68]. After reading the product information, like in Study 1, participants needed to answer "Which backpack is a green product?" and their product preferences. In addition, we collected the participants' demographic data.

5.3. Results

The Cronbach's coefficients of power scale, mood scale, and green consumption scale were 0.91, 0.93, and 0.94 respectively, thereby ensuring internal scale reliability.

5.3.1. Manipulation Check

To check the effectiveness of the power manipulation, we analyzed the data for the following manipulation check items. As expected, the results showed that participants in the "high-power" condition experienced higher power (M = 5.01, SD = 0.92) than those in the "low-power" condition ((M = 3.94, SD = 1.03), F(1, 128) = 38.85, $p < 0.001$). In addition, in order to judge whether participants understood the material information correctly, we used a one-sample t-test of the "environmental protection of products", as in Study 1. The results demonstrated that participants could perceive that backpack E (vs. backpack S) was a green product (M = 5.67 > 4, SD = 1.43, t = 41.78, df = 110, $p < 0.001$). There were no significant differences in mood between the high-power and low-power groups (ps > 0.1).

5.3.2. Hypothesis Testing

The result of the Shapiro–Wilk test showed that the data is normally distributed. To check the equality of variance, we used a Levene's Test. The result showed that the total variance of the two groups was homogeneous (t = −4.76, df = 128, $p < 0.001$). To test the influence of power on green consumption, one-way ANOVA was conducted with power as the independent variable, and green consumption as the dependent variable. According to the results of ANOVA, we found a significant difference in green consumption between these two power conditions (F(1,128) = 22.66, $p < 0.001$). Consistent expectations, participants in the low-power condition (M = 4.93, SD = 1.34) showed a stronger willingness to buy backpack E than those in the high-power condition (M = 3.89, SD = 1.16; see Figure 3), thus providing support for H1.

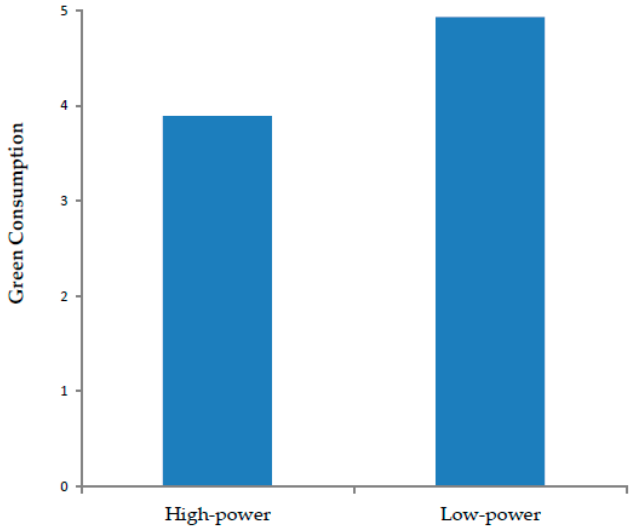

Figure 3. The effect of power on green consumption (Study 2).

In order to test H2 for the mediating role of self-concern, we used a regression analysis [71]. First, with power as independent variable and self-concern as a dependent variable, the regression of power on self-concern was significant ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$). Second, with power as an independent variable and green consumption as a dependent variable, the regression of power on green consumption was significant ($\beta = -0.43$, $p < 0.001$). Third, with power and self-concern as independent variables, green consumption as a dependent variable, the regression of power and self-concern on green consumption was significant ($\beta_{power} = -0.37$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta_{s\text{-}c} = -0.19$, $p < 0.05$ see Figure 4).

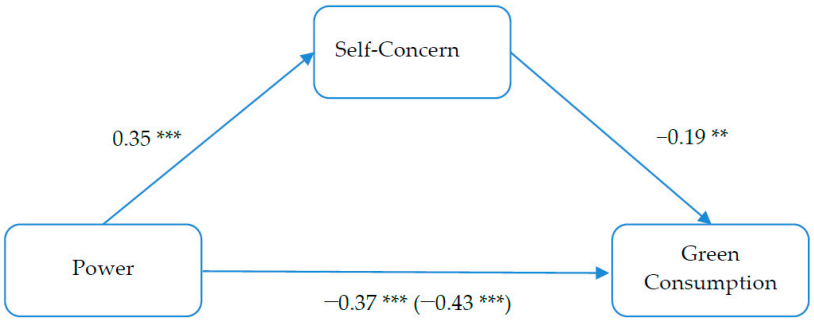

Figure 4. The mediation effect of self-concern.

A bootstrapping analysis was used to test the mediating role of self-concern. A Bootstrap mediating variable test was performed with reference to the mediation analysis model of categorical variables proposed by Hayes (Model 4, n = 5000 resamples) [72]. The results indicated that power was a significant independent variable of self-concern (t = 3.5060, SE = 0.0991, $p < 0.01$). Power was a significant independent variable of green consumption, (t = −4.2798, SE = 0.1011, $p < 0.001$). Self-concern was also a significant independent variable of green consumption (t = −2.0934, SE = 0.0890, $p < 0.05$). In addition, the results showed that the indirect effect (LLCI = 0. 1579 and ULCI = 0. 0094) does not contain 0, thereby providing support for H2.

6. Study 3: The Moderating Effect of Impression Management Motivation

The main aim of Study 3 was to explore the moderating effect of impression management motivation on the relationship between power and green consumption. We predicted that with a weak impression management motivation, low-power (vs. high-power) individuals would show greater preferences for green products over better performing non-green products (as in Study 1 and Study 2). Moreover, we predicted that when people had a strong impression management motivation, differences in preferences would disappear. In other words, both low-power and high-power individuals would show greater preferences for green products.

6.1. Experimental Design and Subject

Study 3 had a 2 (power: high vs. low) × 2 (impression management motivation: strong vs. weak) between-subjects design. Study 3 used a sample of 148 students, who were recruited at a university in Guangdong province and randomly assigned to one of four conditions. After excluding 14 incomplete questionnaires, there were a total of 134 valid questionnaires (mean age = 21.43 years; 43 men and 91 women; 31 in high-power * strong impression management motivation conditions; 36 in high-power * weak impression management motivation conditions; 34 in low-power * strong impression management motivation conditions; 33 in low-power * weak impression management motivation conditions).

6.2. Procedures

Brinol et al. [24] found that the order in which power activation and persuasion information was presented would affect the effect of persuasion. Activating power first would make participants understand the persuasion information according to their preconceptions, while presenting the persuasion information first and then activating power would make the latest persuasion information and conceptions take effect. Therefore, in Study 3, we manipulated the impression management motivation before power activation.

The first part of this process is the manipulation of impression management motivation. According to the study of White and Peloza [69], participants who were randomly assigned to the strong impression management motivation group would read the following sentences at the beginning:

"This questionnaire will be used as a record of your grade. After completing the questionnaire, you need to discuss your responses with other participants in a group of five people. Afterward, submit the questionnaires after evaluation." They were also asked to provide their student number, name, and major(s) in the questionnaire. Participants who were randomly assigned to the weak impression management motivation group would read the following sentences at the beginning: "This questionnaire will be used for academic research. It will be very helpful for this study if you fill in the questionnaire carefully. Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. Besides, the answer is open." Then, we measured the impression management motivation of participants by using the impression management scale developed by White and Peloza (e.g., "I want to present myself to others in a positive way (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)") [69].

For the rest of the experiment, we manipulated power and measured self-concern and green consumption, as in Study 2. Afterward, participants reported their demographic information.

6.3. Results

The Cronbach's coefficients of the power scale, the impression management motivation scale, and the green consumption scale were 0.87, 0.76, and 0.96, thereby ensuring internal scale reliability.

6.3.1. Manipulation Check

To check the effectiveness of the manipulation, we analyzed the data on the following manipulation check items. As expected, the results showed that participants in the "high-power" condition experienced a higher power (M = 5.08, SD = 1.03) than did those in the "low-power" condition ((M = 3.78, SD = 0.96), $F(1, 132) = 57.06$, $p < 0.001$). The measure of impression management motivation showed that participants in the "strong impression management motivation" condition reported higher scores (M = 5.20, SD = 0.77) than did those in the "weak impression management motivation" condition ((M = 4.09, SD = 0.75), $F(1, 132) = 55.43$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, the results showed that participants could perceive that backpack E (vs. backpack S) was a green product (M = 6.01 > 4, SD = 1.14, t = 60.98, df = 133, $p < 0.001$).

6.3.2. Hypothesis Testing

A 2 (power: high vs. low) × 2 (impression management motivation: strong vs. weak) ANOVA on green consumption revealed a significant main effect of power ($F(1, 130) = 23.30$, $p < 0.001$), a significant effect of impression management motivation ($F(1, 130) = 82.53$, $p < 0.001$), and a significant interaction ($F(1, 130) = 35.29$, $p < 0.001$). As we predicted, a simple-test revealed that when consumers have a strong impression management motivation, there was no significant difference between the high-power (M = 5.21, SD = 0.76) and low-power (M = 5.04, SD = 0.65) conditions on green consumption ($F < 1$). Both of them showed preferences for green products. In contrast, the low-power condition (M = 4.55, SD = 0.58) led to significantly more positive purchase intentions than the high-power condition (M = 2.85, SD = 1.37) when the consumer had a weak impression management motivation ($F(1, 131) = 39.54$, $p < 0.001$; see Figure 5), thereby providing support for H3a and H3b.

According to Baron and Kenny [71], in order to test the moderated mediating role of self-concern, green consumption was regressed on the power and impression management motivation. The results indicated that the interaction of power and impression management motivation was a significant independent variable of green consumption with power, impression management motivation, and power × impression management motivation as the independent variable ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$). The interaction was also a significant independent variable of self-concern with power, impression management motivation, and power × impression management motivation as the independent variable ($\beta = -0.09$, $p < 0.05$). In addition, power × impression management motivation was also a significant independent variable of green consumption with power, impression management motivation, power × impression management motivation, and self-concern as the independent variable ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$).

A bootstrapping analysis was used to test the moderated mediating role of self-concern. The bootstrap mediating variable test was performed with reference to the mediation analysis model of categorical variables proposed by Hayes (Model 8, n = 5000 samples) [72]. Under a 95% confidence level, a consumer's self-concern was found to mediate the influence of power on green consumption. The results showed that the indirect effect (LLCI = 0. 0025 and ULCI = 0. 2411) does not contain 0. Furthermore, under weak impression management motivation, the mediating effect of a consumer's self-concern was positive and significant (LLCI = −0.3649, ULCI = −0.1354). Under the strong impression management motivation, the mediating effect of a consumer's self-concern was positive and significant (LLCI = −0.2495, ULCI = −0.0457).

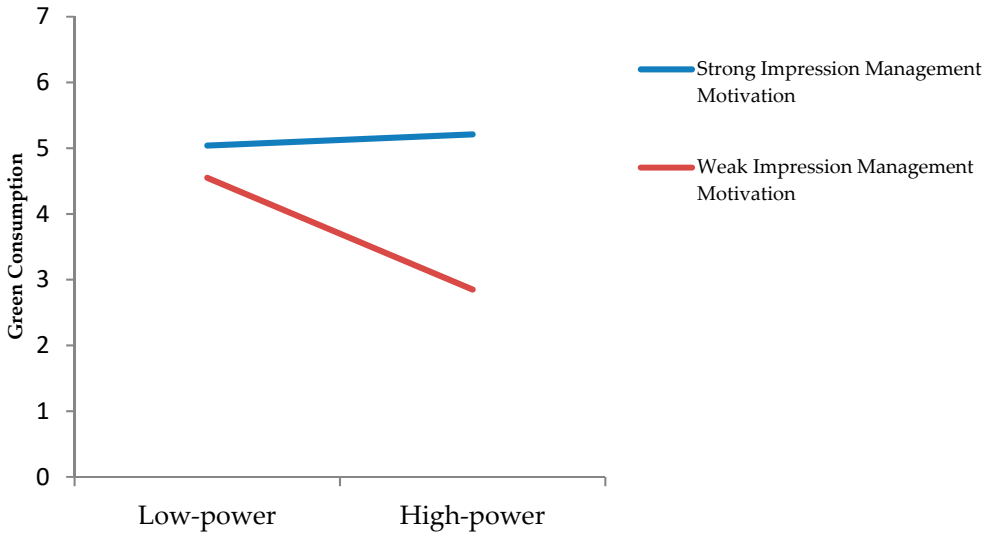

Figure 5. The moderating effect of impression management motivation.

7. Conclusions and Discussion

7.1. Conclusions

Based on the Agentic–Communal Model [19], we activated power through recall tasks [46] and group tasks [51] to explore the relationship between power and green consumption. Consistent with the conclusion that low-power individuals would behave more prosocial [73], low-power consumers (vs. high-power consumers) had a stronger willingness to engage in green consumption (supporting H1). In addition, the study also found that this effect was mediated by self-concern (supporting H2). Moreover, the effect was moderated by impression management motivation. To be specific, when consumers had a strong impression management motivation, both high-power and low-power consumers tended to have greater preferences for green products (supporting H3a). However, when consumers had a weak impression management motivation, the individuals with high-power paid more attention to themselves, forming weaker green consumption intention. On the other hand the individuals with low-power paid more attention to others, thereby forming stronger green consumption intentions (supporting H3b).

7.2. Theoretical Implication

This research further deepens research on power and green consumption, mainly including the following three theoretical contributions. Firstly, the conclusion of this paper contributes to extending the Agentic–Communal Model to the field of green consumption. The previous research on the Agentic–Communal Model has explained how power shapes consumer value and behavior and has concentrated on consumers' psychological perceptions [20,21], consumer behaviors [22,23], consumer information processing, and persuasion [24,25]. However, the findings of previous research

are only related to personal consumption behaviors, such as compensation consumption [50], brand transformation [27], etc., and rarely involve consumption at a social level. Green consumption is different from other consumption behaviors because consumers achieve social (and other) benefits at the expense of their own interests [74]. The role of power in the trade-off between the individual and society is a worthy research topic. In this paper, the main effect explained how power, a social psychological factor, affects the trade-off between personal economic interests and sustainable development in society and the environment. The moderating effect of impression management motivation explained how individuals with different power make a trade-off between personal benefits and social recognition. Therefore, this paper has proven that the Agentic–Communal Model is also available to the field of green consumption.

Secondly, this study has enriched the theoretical research on green consumption and marketing through introducing power. Previous research on green consumption has mainly concentrated on four aspects: demographics [75], product [76], psychology [77], and external intervention [45]. On the one hand, most of the research on psychological effects is based on long-term psychological factors, such as environmental values [78] and moral standards [12], which are relatively stable. Only a limited amount of research on green consumption has explored psychological effects in the field of instant psychology. On the other hand, previous research explored the psychological mechanism of green consumption from the perspective of value perceptions and social concepts, instead of from the perspective of resource perception. Power affects differences in the perception of resource control. Further, power is a psychological factor that not only exists in daily life for a long time but can also be immediately activated or even changed by other stimulation.

Finally, this study provided a new theoretical explanation for minimizing the negative consequences of the Green Attitude-Behavior Gap [79,80]. How to minimize the Green Attitude-Behavior Gap is currently a focus issue of green marketing. This study explored the boundary conditions that affect the relationship between individual power and green consumption, highlighting the role of impression management motivation on this effect. By strengthening consumers' impression management motivations, consumers could realize that green consumption could help them to establish a positive image, which is conducive to the achievement of their goals, thus narrowing the gap.

7.3. Practical Implication

The findings of this study have practical significance for guiding firms to develop green marketing strategies through power, which contributes to sustainable enterprise development and environmental sustainability.

First, this study provides new ideas for market segmentation in green marketing. Firms can effectively use different levels of power to carry out market segmentation through information collection from member and other means to distinguish consumers with different interests. In addition, firms can highlight the utility value of green products to consumers with high-power. Meanwhile, firms can focus on the pro-social value of green products for low-power consumers and emphasize that green consumption is conducive to establishing relationships with others.

Second, this study will help to illuminate a new path for green marketing strategies in product attributes. Previous green marketing strategies have mostly emphasized the green attributes of products. However, these attitudes are likely to decrease consumers' perceptions of the functional attributes of products. Therefore, firms could develop marketing strategies and communication strategies based on power. For example, they could activate consumers' power by arousing consumers' positive associations with nature and the environment in green advertising, through which the consumer's intent to purchase green products will be increased. Meanwhile, firms can also use information on social status, pro-society, and responsibility to enhance consumers' impression management motivation, in order to conduct consumers toward more green consumption.

7.4. Limitations and Further Research Directions

There are a few limitations in this study and some constructive directions for future research. The empirical results of this study verify the partial mediating role of self-concern on the influence of power in green consumption, indicating the existence of other mediating effects, such as environmental concerns. Therefore, other mechanisms need to be further explored to extend the psychological mechanisms of the effects of power on green consumption and enhance the persuasiveness and reliability of this study. Secondly, this paper used an experimental approach to explore the relationship of the theoretical model. We believe that the PLS-SEM approach is a good choice to further examine the influence of high–low power on green consumption, with power as a continuous variable.

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