

CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS IN SALEM

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Abstract

The environment is being destroyed through industrialisation and unsustainable consumer trends which have increased the emphasis on eco-friendly products and green marketing in the world. This research paper examines the reason why people in Salem City will purchase eco-friendly products and in particular how the environmental concern and features of a product can affect the decision made by consumers. This was an empirical approach to research which collected primary data in form of interviews. A total of 186 participants who were selected through snowball sampling were surveyed. The type of SPSS-20 exploratory factor analysis combined with $KMO=0.762$ and chi-square Bartlett of 4292.355 ($p=0.001$) showed that the data used were appropriate in the analysis. Factor analysis identified that there were four principal factors in consumer purchase: (i) product offers about environmental protection, (ii) special promotions of any product that emphasize the eco-features, (iii) reusability and curiosity, and (iv) less exploiting nature. These dimensions indicate that price, environmental knowledge and social indicators all intertwine to influence preferences. When the products are affordable, readily available, and well advertised, consumers are more likely to opt on products that have been eco friendly. Buyers are also motivated more by the concern of environmental protection and their belief in the quality of the green products.

Keywords: Purchasing Behaviour, Eco-Friendly Products, Environmental Protection, Health Safety and Salem District

Introduction

Since the beginning of industry, people have used nature excessively. Mankind has been shamed for allegedly harming the environment and upsetting the natural order. The significant calamities we are now seeing are a consequence of this. Some instances of human negligence include famines, floods, and the melting of glaciers. Perhaps it is imperative to concentrate on what has to be done to address the situation and focus on building an ecologically sound society. The natural environment has been significantly damaged by man since the advent of industrialisation. The most important necessity of the day is to protect the declining ecosystem. Environmental protection must come first. The incident involving the Gulf of Mexico oil spill and the gas leak at the union carbide plant in India have greatly increased worries about the safety and sanity of human development. People must alter their lifestyles in order to overcome these obstacles. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the countries to indicate their path toward growth in a sustainable manner. The country's subjects, or citizens, as well as the relevant Government are all accountable. Both buyers and sellers must expect environmentally friendly items and make justified decisions.

Because the manufacturing, processing, labeling, and recycling processes used to create eco-friendly items are less harmful to the environment than those used to create conventional products, they should have a less negative environmental effect than those of conventional products. Future growth in the nation's need for eco-friendly items is anticipated. The items' effects on the environment are becoming more important to both producers and buyers. Products that are "green" or safe for the environment are highly valued by both consumers and manufacturers. These include items such as energy-efficient appliances, organic foods, paints made without harmful substances like lead, recyclable paper, detergents made without harmful elements like phosphate, and so on. The green marketing idea is becoming more important to manufacturers and businesses in India. Although several studies have been undertaken on green marketing on a global scale, very little academic study on Indian consumers' perceptions and preferences has been conducted.

As environmental concerns grow in the public eye and among policymakers, more and more corporations are looking to green problems as a driver of strategy shift. Consumers, particularly in metropolitan areas, have altered their practices in response to rising knowledge of environmental concerns. Consumers' attitudes toward green living have undergone a sea change. Many people now feel personally obligated to make environmentally conscious purchasing decisions. However, the vast majority of shoppers have yet to adopt this, and it is still in its infancy. Companies are taking note of the shift in customer behavior and hoping to gain an advantage by tapping into the potential in all of the market's subsets by greening their offerings. There is a newfound awareness of the need to safeguard our planet. Over the last two decades, it has made steady progress toward its stated goal of preserving nature and biodiversity. It is expected that customers will continue to shun goods that harm or destroy the environment in favor of eco-friendly alternatives. The major causes of environmental deterioration are the production of commodities using techniques that contribute to pollution and the demand for such products.

The environmental consciousness of Indian consumers is on the rise. When compared to consumers in China, Canada, and the United States, Indians place a higher value on environmentally friendly items. The results of a poll performed by DuPont indicate that more and more Indians are interested in purchasing environmentally friendly goods, with the majority of respondents believing that items made with bio-based materials have superior performance and are less detrimental to the environment. Since the desires and requirements of man are boundless and the availability of the world's natural resources is finite, it makes sense to prioritize the production and consumption of recyclable and reusable products. Companies can't succeed in their missions and keep their product's market share without actively promoting environmentally friendly options. Companies have been compelled to become environmentally friendly by both government and market pressure. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to help businesses who promote eco-friendly fast-moving consumer products better comprehend and meet the demands of their clientele.

Review of Literature

Ravindra P.Saxena and Pradeep K.Khandelwal (2009)¹ gathered primary information from 400 users. Partial least squares regression was used to analyze the data (t-test). According to the results, customers' opinions on environmentally friendly goods were unaffected by their gender, marital status, age, level of education, occupation, or place of residence. The study's findings give conclusive proof that modern customers value eco-friendly goods more than their conventional counterparts. They are very environmentally conscious and believe that in the future, businesses that adopt a green attitude will be more successful.

Researchers Shyamveer Singh and Parul Khanna (2011)² used a sample of 52 businesses selected using a random and stratified sampling approach to investigate "Green Marketing: An analytic viewpoint with relation to its adoption in few organizations in the Delhi NCR area." The study's findings indicate that, in response to regulatory pressure, businesses have adopted green marketing tactics that increase their use of recycled, reused, and biodegradable materials. The research also confirms that companies must implement the standards (ISO series) in their manufacturing process to meet the quality criteria set by regulators and customers.

¹ Ravindra P Saxena and Pradeep K Khandelwal, "Green Marketing: A Challenge or An Opportunity in the Global Environment", University of Wollongong Research Online, Global Studies Journal, vol. 2, pp. 59-73, ISSN 1835-4432, November 2009

² Shyamveer Singh and Parul Khanna, "Green Marketing An Analytic Perspective with Regards to its Adoption in Few Organizations in Delhi NCR Region", Journal of Asian Research Consortium – AJRSH, vol. 1, Issue 4, ISSN 2249-7315, December 2011

Yogita Sharma (2011)³ has conducted a research using secondary data from various sources (e.g., newspapers, books, articles, journals, and websites) to determine the shifting consumer behavior to green marketing. The research outlined the many phases of the life cycle of environmentally friendly items, including their inception, manufacture, use, and eventual decomposition. The research has focused on green product merchants, with case studies of Indian firms included to provide light on their green marketing approaches. The research found that as consumer knowledge has risen, businesses have begun to implement green policies and procedures, and it is now the job of those businesses to educate customers on the value of eco-friendly goods and services.

The purpose of the research conducted by Krishna kumar veluri (2012)⁴, titled ""Green Marketing: Indian Consumer Awareness and Marketing Influence on Buying Decision,"" was to learn about Indian consumers' perceptions of green goods, their familiarity with eco-friendly options, and the impact of marketers' efforts on their purchasing decisions regarding non-durable goods. Primary data are from a random sample of 120 female shoppers between the ages of 30 and 60 who frequent malls and shopping centers. Mean, covariance, standard deviation, t-test, factor analysis, and multiple regressions are among the statistical approaches used. According to the results, the vast majority of respondents had a good reaction and shown an openness to purchasing eco-friendly products. It's also been established that most people can't define a certain sort of eco-friendly goods and that they tend to trust well-known brands and rate green items based on their personal experiences. This demonstrates that customers are not yet aware of green products. It has been determined that the green marketing community's attempts to increase consumer awareness have been insufficient.

The efficiency of green marketing and green brands have been studied by Roshny Unnikrishnan (2012)⁵. The goal is achieved by conducting research among a representative sample of 100 American adults on their knowledge, trust, pricing, availability, and opinion of the efficacy of green brands. The basic data gathered has been analyzed using a variety of statistical methods. Aware, green, and socially conscious of green goods were shown to have the most positive impact on responders, while price and availability were found to have the greatest negative impact. The research also found that the creation of eco-labels and the provision of certification for green items may help counteract unfavorable reactions.

In Pune, Uday Kiran (2012)⁶ has researched the prospects and difficulties of eco-friendly advertising. Primary and secondary sources are used in the analysis. Positive attitudes about green marketing were seen among individuals who took more aggressive environmental measures. Green marketing has been demonstrated to benefit mainly those who are already engaged in it, according to the research. Very little effect was seen in the purchasing habits of the remaining respondents who were rather indifferent. The research confirmed that several openings for eco-friendly advertising exist, and it recommended that businesses follow suit if they want to succeed. According to the findings, the Indian government should subsidize green product production and launch programs to increase green marketing. According to the findings, another major difficulty in green marketing is the absence of uniformity for authenticating green goods.

Researchers Mohammed Unni Alias Mustafa and Sajila (2013)⁷ set out to gauge consumers' familiarity with concepts like "green marketing" and "green consumption." Four hundred and ninety-four commerce majors at the undergraduate level from aided and government institutions affiliated with the University of Calicut in Kerala were selected using a stratified random selection method. Researchers discovered that participants' knowledge of green marketing and willingness to make environmentally responsible purchases varied significantly. It has been determined that it is important for young people to have a favorable disposition toward resource conservation and support for green goods and green activities. In order to better educate citizens about environmental concerns, eco-friendly product choices, and the value of conserving natural resources, the government and businesses have been encouraged to host consumer education programs in schools. The goal of this study is to investigate how green consumers are and how they feel about green marketing.

An empirical investigation has been completed by Ravinka chopra (2013)⁸. A standardized questionnaire was utilized to obtain information from 200 graduate students using a convenient random selection approach. The research found that consumers believe that corporations provide environmentally friendly items to fulfill their sense of social duty, and that these beliefs are supported by consumers' recurring purchases of these brands. The majority of shoppers use eco-friendly icons to detect "green" goods. Consumers are eager to spread the word about the benefits of becoming green to their friends and family.

³ Yogita Sharma, "Changing Consumer Behaviour With Respect to Green Marketing – A Case Study Of Consumer Durables and Retailing", Zenith International Journal Of Multidisciplinary Research, vol.1, Issue 4, ISSN 2231 5780, August 2011

⁴ Krishna kumar veluri, "Green Marketing: Indian Consumer Awareness and Marketing Influence on Buying Decision", - The International Journal of Research in Commerce & Management, vol.3, Issue 2, pp: 60-64, February 2012

⁵ Roshny Unnikrishnan, "A Study on Customer Awareness of Green Marketing and Green Brand Effectiveness", ZENITH International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, vol.2, Issue 10, ISSN 2249 8834, October 2012

⁶ Uday Kiran, "Opportunity and Challenges of Green Marketing with special references to Pune", International Journal of Management and Social Sciences Research (IJMSSR), vol.1, no. 1, ISSN: 2319-442, October 2012

⁷ Mohammed Unni Alias Mustafa and K.M.Sajila, "Green Marketing Awareness As A Correlate of Green Consumerism of Undergraduate students of the University of Calicut in Kerala", Learning Community: 4(1), pp -37-46, March 2013

⁸ Ravinka Chopra, "An Empirical Study of Consumer Preparedness and Perception", ZENITH International Journal of Business Economics and Management Research (ZIJBEMR), ISSN 2249-8826, vol.3(4), April 2013

Research Gap

The literature search reveals that researchers have paid attention to many different angles of consumers' attitudes and actions toward eco-friendly goods. Recent and past research has focused mostly on consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in respect to "Green" or "Eco-friendly" products. It is challenging to draw conclusions regarding the link between the different components of Environmental Concern and Behaviour of Consumers towards Eco-friendly Products due to the lack of study on this issue and the inconsistent findings. Despite the many theoretical and empirical contributions to the field, not enough is known about the variables that influence customers' perceptions of eco-friendly goods or how those perceptions affect environmental concern or eco-friendly purchasing decisions. The literature also shows that there has been a lack of investigation on the relationship between environmental concern and consumer behavior in India. Very little attention has been paid to the relationship between environmental concern and the purchase of environmentally friendly items, and much less has been paid to the degree to which environmental concern impacts environmental purchase behavior. There is a lack of study that accounts for the multifaceted nature of shoppers' attitudes and decisions when it comes to eco-friendly products in Salem.

Statement of the Problem

At this time, ecological or environmental problems top the list of priorities for any nation. Human activities have resulted in a number of significant environmental problems, including pollution, greenhouse effects, and ecological imbalances. India is one of the world's fastest-growing economies, but it has struggled to strike a healthy balance between economic growth and environmental protection. Any solution to preserve the planet's resources requires not only a radical rethinking and action on the part of government and business organization, but also an immediate attitude change in the purchasing behaviors of consumers in order to contribute to the sustainable and diminished use of nature's resources (Nema, 2011). Many people nowadays would rather purchase and use things that don't harm the environment, as environmental awareness and concern grow. Concern for the environment and rising environmental consciousness are altering customers' wants and requirements and driving behavioral shifts in the way they buy goods and services. Consumers have begun to realize that their purchasing decisions have the potential to greatly affect not just their own health and happiness, but also the health of the planet. Consumers' product choices and spending habits are being profoundly impacted by environmental consciousness. Thus, businesses may now integrate eco-friendly techniques into product and process design, as well as production and promotion. However, businesses that are trying to be more environmentally friendly in their marketing efforts—especially those in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and consumer durables (CD) sectors—face a number of obstacles, including fluctuating demand for eco-friendly products, consumers' lack of knowledge about those products, their negative attitudes and behaviors toward those products, and the high cost of developing and promoting those products. Companies in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and consumer durables (CD) sectors must now cultivate and maintain relationships with all stakeholders (buyers, middlemen, etc.) regarding eco-friendly products and comprehend the environmental buying behavior of consumers with regards to eco-friendly products in order to mitigate the aforementioned problems.

Research Questions

- What are the major constituents of Consumer Buying Behaviour towards Eco-Friendly Products?

Significance of the Study

Population expansion, climate change, and the depletion of natural resources are all threatening humanity's future, and this has sparked the rise of "green" or "environmentally-friendly" marketing. Concurrently, "Green Consumerism" and "Environmental purchasing behavior" are emerging as a new movement in the marketplace. Consumers nowadays are more discerning than ever before, and they place a premium on purchasing goods that do not negatively impact the environment. Businesses are also doing their part to safeguard the planet by adopting and enforcing a variety of environmental safeguarding policies. Protecting nature and its bio-diversity has been an ongoing worry for the last two decades, and that concern has been progressively expanding. The purchasing habits of Indian consumers are shifting in the same direction, away from potentially dangerous items and toward eco-friendly alternatives. Consumers' purchasing habits are crucial to the success of every company, not only the makers of the items themselves but also the middlemen and women whose jobs it is to get those things to the end users. As a result, learning about customer habits reveals not just where a company's marketing strategy may need improvement, but also where it's succeeding in pleasing its clientele. A consumer's propensity to shop is a major factor in whether or not they will choose to purchase an environmentally preferable goods. A company's choice on what to produce, whether or not to continue making it, and how much to charge for it may all be gleaned from customers' individual buying habits and spending habits. This information is then used by the marketing team to make crucial choices about the development of future marketing strategies and the selection of promotional offers and marketing campaigns designed to boost sales. Companies might benefit from learning about customers' preferences for eco-friendly goods in order to realign their production and marketing strategies. The findings are important because they show businesses that green marketing is an opening they can use to further their missions. The study's most noteworthy findings include the identification of factors that contribute to environmentally conscious purchasing decisions.

Objectives

- To identify the various components of consumer purchase behaviour that induces the consumers to buy eco-friendly products.

Research Methodology

The study's research approach is based on the perspectives towards the consumption of the eco-friendly products and helps to determine the consumer purchase behaviour aspects. This is an empirical study, which means it must be based on the researcher's own observations and judgments. An interview schedule is used to gather information for this investigation. Based on the literature and the research area, the interview schedule was constructed. A Cronbach Reliability Value of 0.897 was obtained from the 51 eco-friendly who participated in the testing of the interview schedule. According to the analysis, any number over 0.70 is regarded to be reliable enough to be included in the main research. The interview schedule built is thus reliable based on the above tested values. The consumers of eco-friendly products in the study area of Salem City are the focus of this research. Non-random sampling is used to pick employees in this area since the study's population frame is unbounded. The population was sampled using the snowball sampling method. Because of the study's microlevel focus, the sample size is set at 186. Salem City has been chosen as the focus of the research because of the growing number of garment-related businesses in the region. The data were analyzed using exploratory factor analysis. Analyzing the data gathered from unorganized sector female workers was done using SPSS-20.

Results

Data reliability for the factors was evaluated using factor analysis. The variables were organized by factor using exploratory factor analysis. The following sheds light on the reliability of the variables used in the analysis of consumers' purchase decisions related to eco-friendly items.

The consumer purchase behaviour towards the eco-friendly products is the major focus area of the research. The variables used in the study were grouped into factors to identify major determinants that influence the consumer purchase behaviour. The results in the identification of the major determinants that influence the consumer purchase behaviour towards eco-friendly products are given below

Table – 1- KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.762
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4,292.355
	df	253
	Sig.	<0.001**

The KMO test is vital in assessing the normality of the distribution which deals with the opinions of the consumers towards the consumer purchase behaviour of eco-friendly products. The tested results are significant which confirms the normality of the distribution. The factors derived from the analysis will be reliable which is warranted by the results of the above test. The following deals with the initial and extracted values of variables involved in the factor analysis.

Table –2- Variance Analysis

Variable	Eigen Values Extracted			Sums of Squared Loadings (Extracted)			Sums of Squared Loadings (Rotated)		
	Sum	Variance (%)	Total	Sum	Variance (%)	Total	Sum	Variance (%)	Total
1	5.372	23.357	23.357	5.372	23.357	23.357	3.547	15.421	15.421
2	2.130	9.260	32.617	2.130	9.260	32.617	3.258	14.164	29.584
3	1.634	7.104	39.720	1.634	7.104	39.720	2.046	8.895	38.479
4	1.451	6.309	46.030	1.451	6.309	46.030	1.737	7.550	46.030
5	1.339	5.821	51.851						
6	1.194	5.190	57.040						
7	1.126	4.895	61.936						
8	1.034	4.497	66.433						
9	0.879	3.821	70.254						
10	0.815	3.543	73.797						
11	0.731	3.178	76.975						
12	0.670	2.913	79.887						
13	0.624	2.712	82.600						
14	0.587	2.554	85.154						
15	0.560	2.435	87.588						
16	0.527	2.290	89.878						
17	0.498	2.164	92.042						
18	0.399	1.734	93.776						
19	0.358	1.557	95.333						
20	0.334	1.451	96.783						
21	0.286	1.244	98.028						
22	0.246	1.070	99.098						
23	0.207	0.902	100.000						

The table of variance is helpful in understanding the number of factors formed based on the analysis. There are eight factors formed as per the results of the table which is evident from the eigen values but the factor analysis was instructed to extract top four factors. The top four factors that are vital for determining the consumer purchase behaviour towards the eco-friendly products is reflecting 46 percent of the opinions involved in the study.

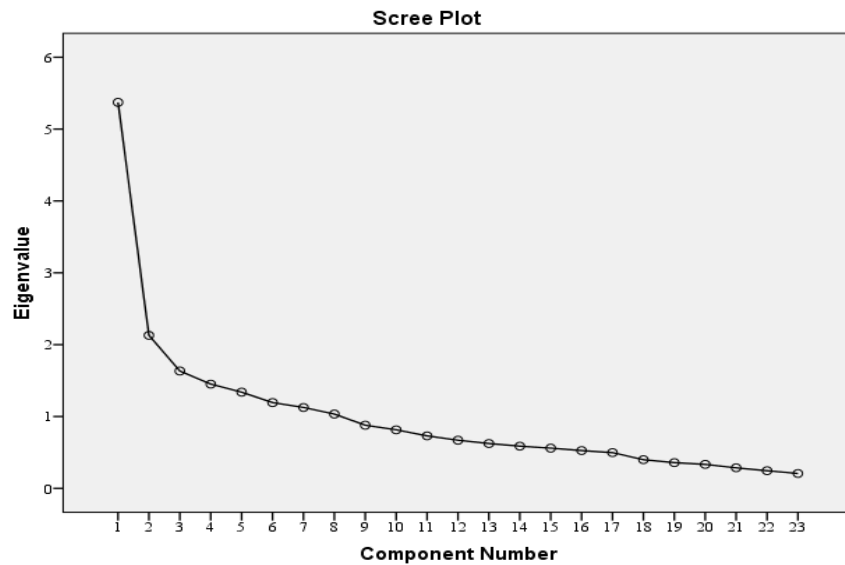


Chart – 1- Scree Plot- Consumer Purchase Behaviour towards Eco-Friendly Products

Table – 3 Rotated Component Matrix - Consumer Purchase Behaviour towards Eco-Friendly Products

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Unique offers and discount from the manufacturers	0.688			
Enhances various innovative approaches to improve eco-friendly products	0.638			
Safeguarding the environment is primary inducement for using Eco-friendly products	0.625			
Enhanced quality of the products	0.583			
Reduces dependence on the natural resources	0.581			
It helps to reduce the various forms of impacts on the environment	0.570			
Need for change in current trend of consumerism	0.555			
Wants to conserve natural resources for future generations	0.521			
Helps to improve the company's response towards the environment		0.796		
Attractive advertisements promote usage of eco-friendly products		0.734		
Degradable/Recyclable nature of the products		0.644		
Environmental consciousness provokes to buy these products		0.605		
Multi-Utility nature of the products		0.555		
Need to match the trend of current generation		0.527		
Reduces health impacts on the consumers based on reduction of harmful ingredients in production			0.750	
Curiosity to understand the originality in the claim of the products			0.643	
Reusable quality of the eco-friendly products			0.547	
Endorsement from celebrities and medical experts induces usage				
Social pressure to purchase these products				
E-commerce availability of the products				
Helps to reduce exploitation of natural resources				0.664
Adopting towards green lifestyle				0.651
Goodwill value of the brand				

The elements of the consumer purchase behaviour towards the usage of the eco-friendly products is assessed using the factor analysis which reveals the following factors are high influencers

○ **Element – I – Offers and Environmental Conservation**

The consumer purchase behaviour is highly dependent on the element of offers and environmental conservation which is derived from the variables of Unique offers and discount from the manufacturers (0.688), Enhances various innovative approaches to improve eco-friendly products (0.638), Safeguarding the environment is primary inducement for using Eco-friendly products (0.625), Enhanced quality of the products (0.583), Reduces dependence on the natural resources (0.581), It helps to reduce the various forms of impacts on the environment (0.570), Need for change in current trend of consumerism (0.555) and Wants to conserve natural resources for future generations (0.521)

○ **Element –II- Unique Promotional Strategies using Environmental Features**

The second element is extracted from the variables of Helps to improve the company's response towards the environment (0.796), Attractive advertisements promote usage of eco-friendly products (0.734), Degradable/Recyclable nature of the products (0.644), Environmental consciousness provokes to buy these products (0.605), Multi-Utility nature of the products (0.555) and Need to match the trend of current generation (0.527)

○ **Element – III- Reusability and Curiosity**

The element of reusability and curiosity is dependent on the variables of Reduces health impacts on the consumers based on reduction of harmful ingredients in production (0.750), Curiosity to understand the originality in the claim of the products (0.643) and Reusable quality of the eco-friendly products (0.547).

○ **Element – IV- Minimised Exploitation of Natural Resources.**

The minimized exploitation of natural resources is extracted from the variables of Helps to reduce exploitation of natural resources (0.664) and Adopting towards green lifestyle (0.651).

Discussions

The consumer purchase behaviour towards the eco-friendly products is determined by four prominent areas that influence the buying decision of consumers in the study area. The consumers are mostly looking for eco-friendly products that are in par with the conventional products at price levels and have significant accessibility in all areas. The retailers' promotion is vital for influencing the consumers to buy the eco-friendly products. The consumers reveal that the offers and discounts have prime importance in influencing their decisions. The various environmentally friendly features of the products are significant for the consumers in making the purchase decision. The consumers are making shift in their consumerism practices based on these components that influence their opinions towards eco-friendly products.

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