

Consumers' Perception on Green Marketing An Empirical Study of Consumer Buying Behaviour towards Eco-Friendly Fast Moving Consumer Goods in Andhra Pradesh, India

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Abstract: Green marketing is inevitable for the attainment of vision and mission of an organization with sustainability. Various studies by environmentalists indicate that people are concerned about the environment and are changing their behaviour patterns. Most of the consumers', both individual and industrial are becoming more alarmed about green products and green product line for their safe and sustainable future. Now, it is the era of recyclable, non-toxic and environment-friendly goods. This has become the new mantra for marketers to satisfy the needs of consumers' and earn better profits with a social benefit. The study will help to address the problems and challenges associated with reaching the environmentally friendly consumer; thereby providing opportunities for manufacturers and retailers of green products. As the green market continues to grow, an understanding of the consumer who is populating it will be a critical success factor for many firms. This study will help to know what really a consumer expects from marketers of green products and also their readiness in accepting those products which are environmental friendly and minimize the environmental degradation in future.

Keywords: Consumers' Perception, Green Marketing, Consumer Buying Behaviour

I. INTRODUCTION

India is a diverse country with strong culture, values and ethics indicated by a significant segment of the population holding advanced degrees, yet also with massive poverty and illiteracy. It is the world's largest democracy and currently India is undergoing a tremendous economic growth. Even then it faces an increasing stresses to its air, water, energy and also the resources use is becoming uncertain. Its agricultural productivity is at risk, whereas its agricultural imports are in raising trend. In today's planet, development can no longer follow the traditional path of emphasizing heavy industries and paying little attention to the surrounding environment. Sustainable development is the watchword of everyday, which means due care should be taken to preserve existing environmental resources for the benefit of future generations. Urbanization and changing consumption patterns have equally contributed for many of the environmental problems faced by the country in the recent years. Severe air pollution affects many cities of India today. Many waterways have become highly polluted by the industrial and urban wastes. Degradation of soil, forest and bio-diversity has become a widely prevalent

phenomenon. The other environmental problems faced by the country include depletion of energy resources, intensive cultivation of fields, poor management of wastes, loss of bio-diversity and a high incidence of variety of diseases and health hazards. Unless the Companies, government and consumers' are responsible for these environmental issues. Nothing can be saved for future generation if they don't take initiatives to attain sustainable development. Many firms are currently undertaking an environmental transformation process with the purpose of reducing the negative externalities that come from their economic activities (Elena Fraj-Andres et al, 2009). Acceleration in the human induced changes in the climate of the earth and it has become the focus of the scientists and social scrutiny as well.

This environmental destruction throws a strong question on whether today's consumption pattern will be the same for the future consumers'. Since 1970s, there has been a growing concern about the future of the earth and its inhabitants in many developed nations. There is a fact that marketers are faced with tremendous changes and are more concerned about the shortages of environmental resources and increased social responsibility (Leob, 1974). On the

other side consumers' also have strong commitment to purchase, use and consumer products that are environmental friendly? When consumers' realize the importance of environmental issues, they will have the tendency to behave positively and act favourably towards the environment. This is called environmentally responsible behaviour. Further, it can be argued that consumers' who are increasingly concerned and realize the essentials of environmental issues are "green consumers". Consequently, marketing products which has an environmentally responsible function is called "green marketing". From the mid 1990s, consumers' in developing countries also started to become more and more environmentally and socially aware (Strong, 1996). Critical consumers' began to emerge as a new force of green consumerism during that period whereby they require social responsibility from corporations (Gurau and Ranchhod, 2005). From 2000 onwards, the force of going green is extended to the Asian region where environmental threats are alarming the local government and citizens as well. There are clear alarms of raising pattern of global warming and climate change impact on global temperature ever before. In spite of these alarming facts, man has not stopped for searching his endless needs. As we all know, the marketing philosophy revolves around doing business profitably by identifying and meeting the needs and wants of consumers'. However, the conventional marketing should view that the environment has its limits. Meeting the need of today's consumers' unsustainably will reduce the ability to meet the needs and wants of future generation consumers'. The growing environmental issues in the past few years in the country have imposed changes in policy towards environmental protection and the companies to think about green marketing.

1.1. EMERGENCE OF GREEN MARKETING CONCEPT

It could be argued that the movement began with the advent of chemical agriculture in the early nineteenth century. At that time, all agriculture was "organic" because there was no other way. Almost as soon as "super-phosphates" and ammonium began to be used, there were some who wanted to do things in the old way, without purchased inputs and machines. Thus, the term was coined in 1940s. The first natural food stores that sprung up in the 1970s in developed countries sold not only the organic products but also some hand made products without chemicals and with easily degradable substance. There was no national distributing chain of natural or organic products, and they were all local, by default. Such stores tended to be found in large cities of many developed nations.

The United States Department of Agriculture took notice and it took nearly 13 years to explore a national organic standard which was created in 1990. The Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA), under President Clinton, began to mark the most efficient examples of other-wise power-hungry devices such as computer monitors and water heaters as being "energy star" compliant with an easily identifiable sticker. It was around the late 1980s and early 1990s that the suppliers of other products began to realize there was a market for goods that utilized recycled materials, did not use chemicals such as bleach or pesticides, did not take advantage of exchange rates to take advantage of farmers in the tropics, used good old creativity to create handy devices that allowed to utilize a non-chemical approach to household tasks, cosmetics and personal care items without fragrance and dyes, cosmetics not tested on animals and any number of periodicals and books on this green/eco-friendly subject. Emphasis on locality, or at least region, would save the cost and fuel of transport, as supply chains in the supermarkets grew hundreds of miles each year with the consolidation of distribution networks. Thus, the green marketplace was born initially.

1.3. GROWTH OF GREEN MARKETING

As we progress into the second decade of the 21st century, more products are being reformulated or repackaged as environmentally friendly. Even more than that, young people are starting their businesses with environment and localism in mind. Choosing to make things that are "real" they use fresh ingredients from local farmers and create food and goods from scratch. They are able to differentiate themselves from others by serving unique product categories. Especially in India, larger corporates like Suzlon, Tata, Amul, ITC, Hero Honda, Wipro, Infosys, Dabur India, HUL, Maruthi, Godrej, BSA, LG electronics and many more corporates now realize that they have to capture going green new market. They need to deliver environmentally friend products that are superior in some way to its conventional counterpart instead of relying on the good intentions of others. Suppliers realize that they need to make it an easy choice for consumers'. A sizeable portion of the population will go out of their way to avoid supporting companies that pollute their home countries, no matter where they are. Indeed, the trend in green marketing is to, in many instances, and accentuate the uniquely upscale nature of the product or service.

1.4. GREEN MARKETING IN INDIA

In India, the emergence of Eco-Mark scheme introduced by the government of India in 1981 was a major step towards the promotion of green marketing in the country. The Eco-Mark scheme of India were initiated with the following objectives;

- To provide incentives to manufacturers and importers to reduce unfavourable environmental impact of products,
- To help consumers' to become environmentally responsible in their daily lives by providing them

information to take account of environmental factors in their daily lives,

- To convince citizens to procure the products which have less environmental impact, and
- To reward actual initiatives by companies to reduce adverse environmental impact of products and ultimately to improve the quality of the environmental and to encourage the sustainable management of resources.

Thereafter, there is a noticeable change in green marketing phenomenon in India for green initiatives in their product and services. Some of the recent examples like the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) have allowed its customers to carry Passenger Name Record (PNR) number of their E-Tickets on their laptop and mobiles, avoiding the printed version of their ticket anymore in order to save papers. Forest and Environmental Ministry of India has ordered the retail outlets like Big Bazaar, Reliance Fresh and many other retailers to provide polythene carry bags to customers only if customers are ready to pay for it. State Bank of India (SBI) has also entered into green service known as "Green Channel Counter". SBI is providing many services like, paperless banking, no deposit slip, no withdrawal form, no checks, no money transactions form and all these transactions are done through SBI shopping and Automated Teller Machine (ATM) cards. State Bank of India turns to wind energy to reduce emissions. The wind project is the first step in the State Bank of India's green banking programme dedicated to the reduction of its carbon footprint and promotion of energy efficient processes, especially among the bank's clients. By using eco and power friendly equipment in its 10,000 new ATMs, the banking giant has not only saved power costs and earned carbon credits, but also set the right example for others to follow. Wipro InfoTech was India's first company to launch environment friendly computer peripherals. For the Indian market, Wipro has launched a new range of desktops and laptops called Wipro Green ware. These products are Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) compliant thus reducing E-waste in the environment. Philips has launched the 'super long life' bulb which saves upto 20 percent energy. The above cases show the corporate initiatives towards the growing concept of green marketing among Indian firms.

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The social shift towards demonstrating environmental problems and engaging in environmental activities described in the previous section highlights the present need for the study. During the early seventies and certainly the nineties, far fewer consumers' evaluated their consumption choices based on their environmental impact. In addition, significantly fewer environmental friendly alternatives were available in fewer product categories and the majority of research efforts focused on behaviour not

related to the purchase and consumption of goods in the traditional sense, but rather behaviour such as government involvement and energy conservation. Most of the recent environmental study in consumer behaviour tends to focus on post-purchase behaviour like recycling and waste disposition, leaving a gap in progress towards an understanding of the impact of environmental issues on green product purchase decision and the drives for the consumption decisions that they make. The dietary and lifestyle behaviour of today's consumers' have in fact become increasingly selective and oriented by their willingness to invest large sums in purchasing organic products and other quality lifestyle products like green electronics and green vehicles as well, which show significant progress in terms of becoming more environmentally friendly categories. There are still significant areas of the consumer goods market in which few green alternatives exist. Therefore, most of the companies are launching green products with focus on the consumer expectations. It is not known how far the consumer expectations are met by the marketers of green products. To fill the void, this study is taken up, in the city of Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. Further, the study was carried out with following objectives.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of the study is to analyze the consumer awareness on environmental issues and its impact on purchase behaviour of green products in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. The specific objectives of the study are:

- 1) To study the consumer awareness on environmental issues and its impact on purchase behaviour of selected green products,
- 2) To investigate the demographic profiles of the consumers' and their differences in understanding the environmental issues and their preference for the selected green product,
- 3) To study the extent of consumers' pre-purchase search for green products,
- 4) To study the relevant attributes which influence purchasing of organic foodstuffs, green electronics and green vehicles specifically, and
- 5) To study the problems faced by consumers' in locating the green products and the implications of the above for green marketing organisations, in designing futuristic green marketing strategies.

IV. HYPOTHESES

The above objectives require the following hypothesis to be tested.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in green values on the basis of gender

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in preference of green products with respect to the academic qualifications of the consumer.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in buying intentions for green products with respect to the academic qualification of the consumer.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in preference of green products with respect to the gender of the consumer.

H₀₅: There is no correlation between green values and preference for green products.

V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Green marketing is inevitable for the attainment of vision and mission of an organization with sustainability. Various studies by environmentalists indicate that people are concerned about the environment and are changing their behaviour patterns. Most of the consumers, both individual and industrial are becoming more alarmed about green products and green product line for their safe and sustainable future. Now, it is the era of recyclable, non-toxic and environment-friendly goods. This has become the new mantra for marketers to satisfy the needs of consumers' and earn better profits with a social benefit. The study will help to address the problems and challenges associated with reaching the environmentally friendly consumer; thereby providing opportunities for manufacturers and retailers of green products. As the green market continues to grow, an understanding of the consumer who is populating it will be a critical success factor for many firms. This study will help to know what really a consumer expects from marketers of green products and also their readiness in accepting those products which are environmental friendly and minimize the environmental degradation in future.

VI. METHODOLOGY AND MEASUREMENT

The unit of analysis in this study is the consumer level. Questionnaire survey was applied in this study to collect information from the consumers. Information collected through consumer survey is utilized for further analysis and verification of hypotheses. Green Consumer Value Scale developed by Haws et al, 2010 was adapted in this study to measure the green value of the consumer. Classification of consumers from Green Gauge Study of Roper Organisation (2001) was adapted in this study. Ten consumers were asked to fill the questionnaire for pretesting and to identify the ambiguity in terms, meanings and issues. Therefore the questionnaire had a high level of content validity. The respondents were asked to rate the statements on a 5 point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Since the neutral point on the scale was 3, those means above 3 suggests overall agreement with the statement and the mean below 3 reflects disagreement. 702 valid responses for the

questionnaire were received. After the pretest, the sample elements were selected as per convenience and were asked to return the filled questionnaires within one week.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondents surveyed were aware about the green products and practices. However most of the respondents were not aware about the initiatives taken for promoting green marketing practices by central/state government, NGOs and business houses in Andhra Pradesh suggesting need for better marketing communication from these entities and have to strongly communicate to the customers about their green initiatives. Newspaper and Television were found to be the most known sources of information regarding green products to the consumers.

7.1. CONSUMER PERCEPTION ABOUT GREEN PRODUCTS AND PRACTICES

As revealed from the mean score (3.57), respondents agreed that organizations with green claims are really concerned about the environment. This implies that consumers are not skeptic about the green claims of the organizations. Consumers strongly agreed that the environmental degradation has risen in the last decade. Their mean score was found to be 4.38 on a scale of 5. Also, consumers strongly agreed to the fact that the environment will be degraded more in the next five years with a mean score of 4.15 on a scale of 5. All consumers have rated the seriousness on higher side for various factors that are considered as environmental concern. Consumers' agreement regarding environmental degradation was high and prefer green products over conventional products to protect the environment. Marketers can come up with new green products and communicate the benefits to the consumers. Respondents have rated the seriousness of various environmental concerns as high. The responses have marketing implications in terms of designing marketing communication campaigns, as higher mean score representing higher concern regarding the same amongst consumers and thus could be used while promoting green products. Consumers were strongly agreeing for the importance of green marketing practices and have rated "Manufacturing Eco-Friendly Product" as the most important green marketing practice followed by "Educating customers to use products in environmental friendly manner" with a mean score of 4.67 and 4.64 respectively. All the green marketing practices were found to be considered as important by the consumers with none of the green marketing practice having scored less than 4.10 (see Table 1). This suggests that consumers are concerned about the state of environment and expect the organizations to employ green practices towards the protection of environment.

Table 1: Consumer perception about importance of green marketing practices

Green Marketing Practices	Mean	Std. Deviation
Manufacturing Eco Friendly Product	4.67	0.658
Educating customers to use products in environmental friendly manner	4.64	0.733
Manufacturing products through eco-friendly process	4.53	0.650
Modifying products to make them environmental friendly	4.36	0.807
Modifying product packaging to suit environment	4.30	0.841
Promoting products through eco-friendly modes of communication	4.20	0.844
Using green supply chain for procurement and distribution	4.11	0.865
Branding product associating with green marketing practices	4.10	0.839

“Message/Theme of the advertisement” was rated as the most important element of green product’s advertisement (with mean score of 4.60), followed by “Punch-line of the advertisement” (with mean score of 4.04). The responses have marketing implication in terms of designing marketing communication campaigns focusing on message or theme of advertisements.

7.2. ATTITUDE

The reliability analysis of Green Consumer Scale has shown the Cronbach’s Alpha value as 0.726 (as seen in Table 2)

Table 2: Green consumer value scale reliability analysis

Cronbach’s Alpha	No. of Items
0.726	6

Table 3: Green consumer value measure

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
Green Value: It is important to me that the products I use do not harm the environment.	4.43	0.690
Green Value: I am concerned about wasting the resources of our planet.	4.17	1.108
Green Value: I would describe myself as environmentally responsible.	3.85	0.871
Green Value: I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions.	3.77	0.772
Green Value: I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more environmentally friendly.	3.70	1.057
Green Value: My purchase habits are affected by my concern for our environment.	3.43	1.005
Overall Green Value	3.88	0.608

The Overall Green Value of the consumers is found to be 3.88 i.e. the consumers are concerned about the protection of the environment.

7.3. CONSUMERS ACTION

Consumers felt that green products are priced higher than conventional products (with mean score of 3.83). They have revealed that they prefer the green products over conventional products while purchasing (with mean score of 3.78). Consumers have also revealed that they consider the ill effect of the manufacturing and consumption on natural environment and the price of the green product affects their purchase behavior with mean score of 3.59 and 3.58 respectively. As consumers consider the ill effects of manufacturing and consumption on natural environment it can be said that following green marketing practices not only lead to social good but also make good business sense. When asked about the factors that affect the purchase of green products, consumers rated “awareness about green product” first with the mean score of 4.31, followed by “availability of green product”, and

“product price” at second and third position. This implies that marketers have to extensively market and communicate the availability of green products to the consumers.

VIII. RESULTS OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

With respect to the first hypothesis (H₀₁), it was found that there is no significant difference in green consumer values on the basis of gender; overall green value of consumers was found to be 3.88 and p-value for overall green consumer value was found to be 0.675 which states that null hypothesis is accepted and it can be inferred that gender of the consumers does not affect their green values.

With respect to second and third hypothesis (H₀₂ and H₀₃), no significant difference was found in the preference of green products, and purchase intention for green

products with respect of academic qualification of consumer, with p-value of 0.322, and 0.727 respectively, failing to reject the null hypothesis and stating that qualification of consumers does not affect their preference and purchase intention towards the green products.

With respect to fourth hypothesis (H_{04}), it was found that there is no significant difference with respect to gender and preference of green products, i.e. the preference of green products does not depend on the gender of the consumer.

With respect to fifth hypothesis (H_{05}), a moderate positive correlation was found between green consumer values and purchase intention for green products with Pearson

Correlation Coefficient coming to as 0.445. It can be inferred that purchase intention of green product is dependent on the green values of the consumers.

8.1. Influence of green consumer values on purchase of green products

The value of correlation coefficient, $R=0.445$ suggests that there is moderate positive correlation between preference of green products and green values of the customers. However only 19.8 % (R-square values of 0.198) variation in purchase preference is accounted due to green consumer values. This implies that there is impact of other factors also on green purchase behavior. These factors remain to be explored in future research.

Table 4: Influence of green consumer values on purchase decision of green products

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.445	0.198	0.190	0.858

8.2. Influence of green consumer values, awareness about green products and perception regarding seriousness of green marketers on purchase of green products

Only 33.8 % (R-square values of 0.338) variation is accounted due to the green consumer values, green product awareness and perception regarding seriousness of green marketers, on the purchase intention of green products. This implies that there is impact of other factors also on purchase decision towards green products. These factors remain to be explored in future research.

Table 5: Influence of green consumer values, awareness about green products and perception regarding seriousness of green marketers on purchase of green products by consumers

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.581 (a)	0.338	0.282	0.811

IX. CONCLUSION

Consumers' level of awareness about green products found to be high but at the same time consumers are not aware about green initiatives undertaken by various government and non-government agencies signifying need for more efforts from organizations in this regard. Newspaper remains leading source of information for most of the respondents and should be utilized more for reaching out to the consumers regarding green products and practices. Responses were on moderate positive level and we can conclude that consumers are not skeptic about green claims of the organizations and consumers are concerned about the present and future state of environment signifying need for green products and practices. Marketers can come up with new green products and communicate the benefits to the consumers. Due to increased awareness and concern consumer may prefer green products over conventional products to protect the environment. Concerns were more directed towards depletion of Ozone and Global Warming. The consumers are concerned about the state of environment and expect the organizations to employ green practices towards the protection of environment. The results have implication for durable manufacturers especially to practice green marketing. The marketing communication regarding green practices need to focus more on theme and

message. Advertising appeals using green products and practices are likely to move emotions and result in persuasion. It is important for markets to be in top of mind recall of consumers to gain maximum from their green brand positioning. Constant and continuous communication from the organizations' side is required to make an impact and create a distinct green positioning.

Consumers have shown positive attitude towards green products at the same time they are concerned with the availability and price of such products. This implies that Marketers should make the green products available to the consumers for their consumption as customers have shown willingness to buy green products if it is available. As consumers consider the ill effects of manufacturing and consumption on natural environment, they may purchase the green product if marketers can make them aware about the benefits of the green products (which consumers perceive as priced higher) as compared to that of traditional products. It was found that the percentage of people who buy only green products is very low and marketers need to take this as an opportunity to build their product portfolios and promote themselves as green. The study has implications for marketers as well as consumers and makes a good case for start of an era of green marketing in India. The study since focused on a limited geographical area has

limited generalizability but provides good insights regarding behavior of consumers towards green products. Future research could focus on psychographic segmentation of consumers in terms of assessing their green values and preferences. The study can be replicated at a larger scale to get more insights into the behavior of consumers and understand more about green phenomenon.

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