

GREEN CONSUMERISM AS CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTALISM- A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Corporate attitude to environmental issues have changed significantly over the years. For many years, most companies regarded environmentalists as unfriendly and environmental regulation as something to be fought off as long as possible, and then complied with reluctantly. This approach began to change in the late 1980's, first among large companies in the most polluting industries, such as chemicals and oils. By the time of 1992 Earth Summit, some corporate had already embraced green philosophy.

Environmentalism has fast emerged as a worldwide phenomenon. Green Consumerism has played a catalytic role in ushering corporate environmentalism and making business firms green marketing oriented. The emergence of new consumer movement in India has thrown a variety of challenges before its protagonists. Promoting the concept of Green Consumerism is one among them. Green Consumerism creates a balance between the expectations of consumer behaviour and businesses' profit motives – within the orbit of environmental protection. Even though it is increased eco-awareness of Indian customers during the past few decades, there are some barriers to the diffusions of more ecologically oriented consumption and production styles. Therefore, companies are increasingly recognizing the importance of green consumerism. The purpose of the study is to examine the general environmental concern of the consumer, awareness about green products and their willingness to pay on green products. This study based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from the sample survey and secondary data were collected from relevant journals, books and other publications. The study revealed that Consumers are increasingly moving beyond the traditional norm of value for money in selection of products and services and have begun to include other criteria like, value for people and value for the environment.

Key words: *Green Consumerism, Environmentalism, Green Products.*

INTRODUCTION

The green consumer is generally defined as one who adopts environmentally-friendly behaviors and/or who purchases green products over the standard alternatives. This study, the terms green, environmentally friendly and ecology conscious are used interchangeably. Green are environmentally-friendly products are broadly defined as products “that will not pollute the earth or deplete natural resources and can be recycled or conserved. Since the green movement in India is still in its infancy stage, this is one of the initial research attempts to prove a descriptive profile of the environmentally concerned consumer and assess the relative influence of the pledging green marketing movement in encouraging environmentally friendly- consumption behavior among Indian consumers.

It is only since 1990's that the researchers have started academically analyzing consumers and industry attitude towards green marketing. Most of the studies are done in developed countries but such studies however, remain conspicuously missing in the context of developing nations like India.

The trend is that consumers are moving to greener products. The Mintel organization reported results from a study which indicated that the number of consumers who do buy green, has tripled in recent years. Further, it found that the numbers of customers, who never buy green products, has decreased by half.

Concern about the environment has increased steadily among the public of industrialized world and has become of primary concern. This concern has not been limited to industrialized nations such as Germany and US but extended to other less industrialised nations such as India, Philippines, and Turkey. These less industrialised countries have experienced high levels of concern about environmental issues such as water and land pollution and have come to believe that deterioration of the environment would be detrimental to public health. Because many environmental problems are associated with human consumption, the problem of conservation has been brought down to the consumer level. Accordingly consumers are inclined to take some responsibility to reduce environmental damage through the consumption of environmentally friendly products. In turn, this has its impact on marketers of consumer products and organizations because they have to respond to this green challenge. This will also affect policy makers and researchers who seek to influence consumers' behavioral change in order to address environmental issues. With this background the study has been undertaken from the consumer's perspective to know the prospects of green products. The present exploratory research discusses the concept of green marketing and its interface with consumers. It is based on the data collected through a field survey of consumers to assess their attitude towards green marketing.

OBJECTIVES

The present study has been carried out with the following objectives.

1. To study the environmental concern of the consumers in the study area
2. To analyse the consumer awareness towards green products.
3. To study the consumers preparedness to buy green products.
4. To study the areas of consumer preference towards green products.
5. To give suggestions based on the findings of the study.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The primary data for the present study was collected from Consumers of the study area through personal interviews with different sets of questionnaires. The study area comprises of two districts of coastal Karnataka State in India, viz., Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. 200 Consumers have been selected as sample respondents. These consumers were selected on the basis of convenience sampling method. The researcher has taken care to see that the respondents represent gender, age, literacy, income, occupation and area of the population under study.

The primary data collected from the sample respondents on various aspects has been organized in the tabular form. Such organized data has been analysed with the help of percentage for easy understanding of the data and for drawing meaningful conclusion. Along with the primary data, secondary data has been collected from various published sources like books, journals, reports, etc. and by visiting libraries, institutes of consumer education and management institutes. The ideas drawn from these sources have been incorporated wherever necessary to substantiate the primary data.

DATA ANALYSIS**ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN OF CONSUMERS**

The relevant data related to environmental concern has been collected and presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN OF CONSUMERS

Concern	No. of Consumers	Percentage
Yes	138	69
No	62	31
TOTAL	200	100.0

Source: Survey Data

An analysis of Table 1 reveals that out of the 200 Consumers, only 138 (69 percent) have concern on environment. A small percentage (31) of consumers does not show their concern towards environment. Therefore, from the table it is found that a majority of Consumers have concern on environment in the study region.

AWARENESS OF CONSUMERS TOWARDS GREEN PRODUCT

The data has been gathered and presented in Table 2 with reference to the awareness of consumers towards green products.

TABLE 2
AWARENESS OF CONSUMERS TOWARDS GREEN PRODUCT

Awareness	No. of Consumers	Percentage
Yes	64	32
No	136	68
TOTAL	200	100.0

Source: Survey Data

An analysis of Table 2 reveals that out of the 200 Consumers, only 64 (32 percent) are aware of green products. A majority of (136) consumers are not aware of green products. Therefore, from the table it is found that a majority of Consumers do not have knowledge on green products in the study region.

CONSUMERS' PREPAREDNESS TO BUY GREEN PRODUCTS

The data has been gathered and presented in Table 3 with reference to the preparedness of consumers to buy the green products.

TABLE 3
CONSUMERS' PREPAREDNESS TO BUY GREEN PRODUCTS

Preparedness	No. of Consumers	Percentage
Yes	58	29
No	142	71
TOTAL	200	100.0

Source: Survey Data

An analysis of Table 3 reveals that out of 200 Consumers, only 58 (29 percent) are prepared to buy green products. A majority of (142) consumers are not prepared to buy the green products because of high price for such products. Therefore, from the table it is found that a majority of Consumers are not prepared to buy the green products in the study region.

AREAS OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS GREEN PRODUCTS

The relevant data related to the areas of preferences towards green products has been collected and presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
AREAS OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS GREEN PRODUCTS

Areas	No. of Consumers	Percentage
Electrical and Electronics	33	56.89
Detergents	56	96.55
Pesticides	24	41.37
Office Appliances	38	65.51
FMCGs	58	100
Banking Service	42	72.41

N = 58

Sources: Survey Data

Note: Percentage is not equal to 100 because of multiple responses.

An analysis of Table 4 shows that out of the 58 Consumers who are prepared to buy the green products, all the consumers are ready to buy green products coming under FMCGs. Fifty Six (96.5 percent) consumers are ready to buy the pesticides which is eco friendly. Therefore, it is found from the table that out of the total Consumers who are prepared to buy green products, all the consumers are ready to buy green products coming under FMCGs.

FINDINGS

- It is found that a majority of Consumers have concern on environment in the study region.
- It is found that a majority of Consumers do not have knowledge on green products in the study region.
- It is found that a majority of Consumers are not prepared to buy the green products in the study region.
- It is found from the table that out of the total Consumers who are prepared to buy green products, all the consumers are ready to buy green products coming under FMCGs.

SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the findings of the study and observation, the following suggestions are made.

- The Industries should be strictly advised to produce and market only green products.
- The government and the Voluntary consumer organizations should encourage the consumers to buy the green products.
- The legislation can lead to the different degrees of corporate environmentalism, depending on the level of strategy in which the firm includes environmental concerns.
- Wide publicity should be given on green products through creating awareness among the consumers about global warming.

CONCLUSION

Though the consumers willing to purchase green products, many business organization still in behind the need of the eco friendly society. It is suggested business organizations to follow strategies in order to get benefits from the environmentally friendly approach as green products offer business incentives and growth opportunities while it may involve start-up costs, it will save money in the long run. The marketers can identify customer's environmental needs and develop products to address this issue produce more environmentally responsible packages and ensure that products meet or exceed the quality expectations of customers. Finally organization can reinforce environmental credibility by using sustainable marketing and advertising associated with green issues in India.

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