

A Study On Green Products & Green Marketing From The Students' Perspective In Kolkata

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Abstract

As society becomes more concerned about environmental protection, numerous firms and customers have expressed their concern for the impact of products on the environment. The emphasis is on 'green' environmentally friendly items that are critical to long-term sustainable development. India is also paying increasing attention to environmentally friendly production and consumption in support of environmental concerns and sustainable growth. One of the reasons for the emergence of green marketing is environmental issues. An IBM research shows, after the pandemic, ninety three (93%) percent of customers changed their attitudes about sustainability (Sharma, 2022). Green marketing is defined by the 'American Marketing Association (AMA) - as the promotion of items that are assumed to be ecologically friendly'. Green marketing and green product creation are effective ways for businesses to obtain a competitive advantage and generate consumer satisfaction (Yan & Yazdanifard, 2014). According to Adams (2020), awareness does not always equal green product purchases (isn't the best predictor of green product sales). Hearing about the green product or brand is insufficient to make a purchase. Familiarity is a higher standard than awareness because it measures the customer's knowledge and understanding of the green product or brand. The researchers believe that green marketing require greater study when it comes to the familiarity and other affecting factors. The study is aimed at to know about students' familiarity and perceptions of green products. Other factors such as willingness to learn more about green marketing, identifying green product features, preferred mode and source of gaining knowledge about green products, consideration of paying extra money to get such products etc. Students studying in undergraduate and post graduate levels in chosen colleges in Kolkata have been considered for this study.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Familiarity, Green Products, Factors Affecting Preferences

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Introduction

Green Marketing

Green marketing concept gained popularity in the 1970s, but it was not until the late 1980s that it became widely recognized. Many businesses have begun to recognize the importance of acting in an environmentally sustainable manner. Green activism has grown in prominence in our society over the last few decades. Environment-friendly, eco-friendly, and green marketing phrases those refer to goods and services that impact ecosystems or the environment in a minimal or non-harmful way. Customers all over the world began to express concern for environmental protection and began to avoid environmentally hazardous items. Environmental protection has become more important nowadays as people have become more aware of the disadvantages of degradation of natural resources. This has resulted in eco-friendly consumption. Consumers' increased environmental consciousness prompted marketers to adopt green practices and develop environmentally friendly products. Green practices are being adopted by businesses for environmental reasons as well as to comply with the government framework of environmental control. Organizations are creating and labeling environmentally friendly products, and consumer familiarity is critical in this regard.

Familiarity

Consumer values, demographic characteristics, relevance and knowledge of environmental issues, awareness of the availability of alternative products, and customers' perceptions of their activities are all thought to have an impact on customer behavior (Dembkowski & Hanmer-Lloyd, 1994). The most compelling reason to become green is not just to meet and anticipate the requirements of customers, but also to help

businesses get certain advantages by implementing sustainable practices. Familiarity is likely to improve brand perception, raise the likelihood of being included in the evoked set, build favorable affect toward the brand and stimulate purchase behavior (Baker et al, 1986).

Green Products

A green product is one that is designed to have little environmental impact throughout its life cycle and even when it is no longer in use. Green products typically have two primary goals: waste reduction and resource efficiency maximization. They are made using non-toxic chemicals and environmentally friendly techniques, and they are certified by reputed organizations. Green products necessitate investment and creativity. As a result, the cost of developing the products rises, making them more expensive than competing products in the market. The pricing element frequently deters customers from purchasing them.

Factors Affecting Preferences

Due to government laws and a shift in consumer preferences around the world, many companies in India have begun marketing themselves as green organizations. MohdSuki (2013) discussed in his study "Green awareness effects on consumers purchasing decision: Some insights from Malaysia," which aims to investigate the impact of consumers' environmental concerns, green product awareness, green price, and brand image on their green product purchasing decisions. However, there hasn't been much research done in India on green marketing, and there's some doubt about customer knowledge of green products. The Indian consumer's attitudes toward green products, as well as the relationship between attitude and behavior, are equally debatable. Because green marketing differs from regular marketing, marketers must understand the variables that

influence consumers to choose environmentally friendly products.

Review of Literature

“A study on green marketing awareness in Tiruchirapalli District” looked at how knowledgeable people were about green products. According to the study, the majority of those who are aware are women (Banu, M.A.P & Meena, C; 2019).

"A study on rural consumers' green product buying behaviour with special reference to selected villages in Tirupur District" was done. The researcher looked into environmental awareness and the elements that influence consumers' purchasing decisions for green items in Tirupur (Mahesh & Gomathi, 2016).

When environmental awareness, governmental pressure for eco-technology in manufacturing, and public health and safety concerns emerge among individuals, the demand for green products and green concepts rises (Srinivas, 2015).

Green purchasing behaviours include purchasing environmentally friendly and energy-efficient products, insulating homes with new equipment, and purchasing environmentally friendly and energy-efficient autos (Shabani et al., 2013).

A study on Consumer perception and preferences about green marketing in India was conducted and the results showed that a significantly high level of awareness about green marketing and green products existed among the consumers. The study also found the green values of the consumers to be high. Despite the high level of awareness, the consumers showed concerns towards availability and price of the green products. They also showed lack of awareness about various green initiatives undertaken by the Government and various non-

governmental agencies (Bhatia and Jain, 2013).

A study to know consumers' level of awareness about green products in Chennai district concluded that there is a need to educate consumers about green products and their usage and benefits since their awareness level was found to be low. The study found that the awareness about green products is a pivotal point in determining the purchase of such products (Divyapriyadharshini et al, 2019).

Research Gap

Due to government laws and a shift in consumer preferences around the world, several Indian enterprises have begun marketing themselves as green organizations. However, there has been little research on green marketing in India, and there is some doubt about customer knowledge of green products. The Indian consumer's familiarity and attitude toward green products, as well as the relationship between familiarity, attitude and behavior, is also debatable. Usually green marketing differs from regular marketing; marketers must understand the variables that influence consumers to purchase green products. There is lack of studies particularly in Indian context to back up the claim that today's consumers favor ecologically friendly items and are supportive of businesses that do so.

A study conducted by Mokha (2017) analyzed the usage of eco-friendly products among respondents of various age groups and educational qualifications and found that the younger generation are more inclined to use such products. Studies specifically focused on younger generations or students at the college and university levels are scarce in India. The current study will focus on students at college and university levels and test their familiarity with green products and services as well as their

willingness to know about eco-friendly products and services.

According to Bhavana & Thiruchanuru (2018), the concern of environmental issues among generation Y and Generation Z is prevalent but a gap exists in the extent to which it is reaching out to others. The present study is aimed at knowing the familiarity of the generation Z about green products and services and this in turn can help develop a green and sustainable environment. Bhavana & Thiruchanuru (2018) also found that the environmental concerns and its translation into buying behavior are debatable. The current study aims to find out that whether a concern for green products and services always leads to a purchase decision.

Research Objectives

- To study the familiarity of respondent students about green or eco-friendly products.
- To study the respondent students' willingness to know more about green products and their importance.
- To study the media sources from which respondents obtain knowledge about green products.
- To examine the preferences of the respondents for green products and subsequent purchase intentions.
- To study the willingness or otherwise of the respondents to pay more for green products.
- To understand the effect of green marketing practices on the respondents.

Research Methodology

Selection of Sample Population:

Students studying at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in selected colleges in Kolkata across several streams were considered for this study. The rationale for selecting students as University Grants Commission (UGC) mandates environmental studies as a mandatory subject of study. A structured questionnaire was utilized to collect responses from a group of 180 students (N=180) using purposive sampling technique with the help of Google Form. 128 of these respondents answered all of the questions in the survey completely. Hence n=128

Sample Size:

Yamane (1967) offers a simplified formula for calculating sample sizes. For proportions, the following Yamane formula was used to calculate a representative sample: The sample sizes for the proportions listed below were calculated using this formula. $P=0.5$ and a 95% confidence interval.

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

Where the sample size is n, the population size is N=180, and the level of precision is $e=.5$
Required sample size (n) = 124

Primary Data:

A structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data (Google form).

Secondary Data:

Secondary data was gathered from different public sources such as articles, magazines, journals, books, internet etc.

Response Rate: A structured questionnaire (Google Form) was distributed to 180 (UG and PG) students from selected colleges in the Kolkata area. 128 of these respondents answered all of the questions in the survey completely. Response Rate Calculation Formula:

$$\frac{[(\text{Total number of survey responses received}) / (\text{Total number of survey participants})] \times 100}{= 71.1\%}$$
 [Fincham (2008) considers this to be very good response rate]

Analytical Tool Used:

Frequency, number and percentage method.

Period of Study:

Data gathering took around a month during the study (May' 2022)

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents took part in the survey process are given below in table number: 1

Table No: 1 - The demographic profile of the respondents (n=128)

Gender	No. of Respondents
Male	54 (42.2%)
Female	74 (57.8%)
Other	0 (0.0%)
Age (years)	No. of Respondents
18-20	65 (50%)
21-23	54 (42.2%)
24 and Above	10 (7.8%)
Educational Level	No. of Respondents
Under Graduate	109 (85.2%)
Post Graduate	19 (14.8%)

Source: Primary survey data

Analysis & Discussion

Table No: 2 - Are you familiar with the term "Green" or "Eco Friendly"? (n=128)

Question: Are you familiar with the term "Green" or "Eco Friendly product"?	No. Of Respondents
Very much	101 (78.9%)
To some extent	10 (7.8%)
Cannot remember right now	17 (13.3%)

Source: Primary survey data

From Table No: 2 it is clear that 78.9% of the respondents said that they were very much familiar with the term “green or eco- friendly”, while to 7.8% of the respondents the terms were familiar to

some extent. About 13.3% of the respondents said that they could not remember the term at the time of answering the questionnaire.

Table No: 3 - What does the word "green" or "eco-friendly product" mean to you? (n=128)

Question: What does the word "green" or "eco-friendly product" mean to you?	No. of Respondents
Seeks to promote action for better environment	86 (67.2%)
Thoughts for the protection of the environment	67 (52.3%)
Change of production systems which can damage environment	51 (39.8%)
Manufacturing products through environment friendly process	4 (3.1%)

Source: Primary survey data

From Table No: 3 it is clear that the respondents were asked to choose more than one option if applicable, so the responses were mutually inclusive. 67.2% of the respondents answered that green marketing or eco-friendly meant to promote actions for better environment, 52.3% opined that

it meant thoughts for the protection of the environment, 39.8% of the respondents said that it is the change of production systems which can damage environment while a meager 3.1% said that the word meant manufacturing products through environment friendly process.

Table No: 4 – Businesses which utilizes the terms green marketing and eco-friendly (n=128)

Question: What kind of businesses utilizes the terms "green and "eco-friendly"?	No. Of Respondents
Socially responsible companies	92 (71.9%)
Companies involved in safeguarding environment only	81 (61.3%)
Only profit minded companies	9 (7.0%)

Source: Primary survey data

From Table No: 4 it is clear that the respondents were asked to provide their opinions regarding the types of businesses which utilize the terms green or eco-friendly. Mutually inclusive responses were recorded in which 71.9% of the respondents opined

that socially responsible companies use the term, 61.3% opined that companies who are involved in safeguarding the environment use the term while 7% of the respondents held the opinion that only profit minded companies use the terms.

Table No: 5 - Media sources from which respondents obtain knowledge about green products. (n=128)

Question: How did you become aware of "Green" or "Eco Friendly" products	No. of Respondents
Television Ad campaigns	77 (60.2%)
Newspaper education series	61 (47.7%)
Social/Digital media platforms	93 (72.7%)
Class lecture in online mode	36 (28.1%)
Class lecture in offline/physical mode	46 (35.9%)
From the company itself	24 (18.8%)
From State or central government	47 (36.7%)

Source: Primary survey data

From Table No: 5 it is clear that the respondents were asked about the various sources from which they have obtained information about green products. The respondents were allowed to choose more than one source of obtaining knowledge. So, the responses are mutually inclusive. It is found that social or digital media platforms were the leading source of such knowledge for 72.7% of the

respondents. This was closely followed by television advertisement and newspaper education series for 60.2% and 47.7% of the respondents respectively. About 36.7% of the respondents came to know about green or eco -friendly products from advertisements or promotional campaigns of the Central and the State Governments.

Table No: 6 - Company sources from which respondents obtain knowledge about green products (n=128)

Question: Do you obtain knowledge about 'green products' or "Eco Friendly Products" from company sources?	No. of Respondents
Yes	32 (25.0%)
No	48 (37.5%)
Never noticed	48 (37.5%)

Source: Primary survey data

From Table No: 6 it is clear that the respondents were asked whether they receive adequate information on green products or eco-friendly products if they buy green products or avail eco-friendly services. Only 25% of the respondents opined that they found the information provided to be adequate, while 37.5% of the respondents felt

that they did not receive adequate information. The remaining 37.5% of the respondents said that they have never noticed it in the products or services. This is an alarming fact in an era when there is an increased awareness about the use of green or eco-friendly products which do not damage the natural environmental resources.

Table No: 7 - Willingness of the respondents to pay more for green products. (n=128)

Question: If "Green or Eco Friendly" features are included, the price of the products/services may increase. Will you be willing to pay more for your purchase?	No. of Respondents
Yes	45 (35.2%)
No	22 (17.2%)
Need time to think about it	61 (47.7%)

Source: Primary survey data

From Table No: 7 it is clear that the respondents were asked that if for incorporating features of eco-friendliness in a product, its price increases, whether they are willing to pay that extra money. 35.2% of the respondents agreed to pay more,

while 17.2% did not agree to pay more. A major 47.7% of the respondents were unsure and opined that they need to think over about the issue of paying more for a green product.

Table No: 8 - Reasons for wanting to pay more for "Green or Eco Friendly" items or services (n =45)

Question: What are your reasons for wanting to pay more for "Green or Eco Friendly" items or services	No. of Respondents
Personal concern about Environmental protection	36 (81.3%)
Company goodwill as being environment friendly	9 (21.1%)
Enhanced quality of life by use of things which are not harmful for the environment	20 (45.3%)
High level of personal satisfaction by being environmentally responsible	10 (22.7%)

Source: Primary survey data

From Table No: 8 it is clear that the 45 respondents who agreed to pay more for a green product or service were asked the reasons behind such willingness. They were allowed to choose more than one reason. 81.3% of the respondents opined that it is because of their personal concern about environment that they want to pay more. 45.3% opined that use of green products will enhance their

quality of life, 22.7% opined that they would have high level of personal satisfaction by being responsible for a positive environment. 21.1 % of the respondents opined that they would pay extra money to buy green products or services because of the company's goodwill as being environment friendly.

Table No: 9 - Major reasons for aversion (unwillingness) to paying more for "green or environmentally friendly" items or services (n=83)

Question: What are the major reasons for your aversion to paying more for "green or environmentally friendly" items or services?	No. of Respondents
Benefits are not visible	19 (22.7%)
Product or service cost is too high	21 (25.0%)
Environmental issues are gimmicks only	13 (15.6%)
Government should pay the extra cost	24 (28.9%)
Currently not able to afford the high cost	45 (53.9%)

Source: Primary survey data

From Table No: 9 it is clear that 83 respondents were either not ready to pay the extra money or needed some time to think about it. They were asked about the reasons behind such aversions. The principal reason pointed out by 53.9% of the respondents was their inability to afford such costly products or services. 28.9% of the respondents opined that the Government should pay the extra

money, 25% of the respondents felt that the green products or services were too costly, 22.7% of the respondents opined that the benefits from such products or services were not visible or tangible. 15.6% of the respondents opined that environmental issues are gimmicks only which means that they are doubtful about the green practices claims of the companies.

Table No: 10 - Organizations who use "Green marketing" to promote them have an advantage over competitors who do not engage in similar activities or initiatives (n=128)

Question: Do you believe organizations that use "Green Marketing" to promote they have an advantage over competitors who do not engage in similar activities or initiatives?	No. of Respondents
Yes	36 (28.1%)
No	16 (12.5%)
Unsure	76 (59.4%)

Source: Primary survey data

From Table No: 10 it is clear that about 28.1% of the respondents opined that organizations that promote green marketing or eco-friendly product have an edge over their competitors engaged in similar business while 12.5% of the respondents opined that there is no competitive advantage

gained by organizations that promote green marketing. A major 59.4% of the respondents were unsure about it which reveals that they do not have much concern over the issue of green products and their marketing.

Table No: 11 - Green Marketing feature or factors had the most impact on purchasing decisions (n=128)

Question: Which Green Marketing feature or factors had the most impact on your purchasing decisions?	No. of Respondents
Product	48 (37.5%)
Package	29 (22.7%)
Price	21 (16.4%)
Green tag promotion	39 (30.5%)
Value added services	11 (8.6%)
All of the above	71 (55.5%)

Source: Primary survey data

From Table No: 11 it is clear that the respondents were asked to mark more than one factor in case they were applicable. So the responses here are mutually inclusive. The factor having the most impact on purchase decisions was the product itself as opined by 37.5% of the respondents. The second most important factor having an impact on purchase decision was the promotion of the green tag as opined by 30.5% of the respondents. Package, price and value added services were the factors which affected purchase decisions for 22.7%, 16.4% and 8.6% of the respondents respectively. About 55.5% of the respondents opined that all the above factors prompted them to make their purchases of the green product.

Research Findings

- The study found that 78.9% of the respondents self-proclaimed that they are very much familiar with the words green or eco-friendly while 13.3% of the respondents could not remember hearing the term. This is surprising in view of the fact that UG courses in all colleges have Environmental Study as a compulsory subject and green products and green marketing has evolved as an important area to ensure environmental protection and sustainable development.
- It has been found that social or digital media

platforms are the chief source from which respondent students have received majority of the information about green or eco-friendly products. Lesser percentages of students opined that they received the information from physical or online classes. Social media thus acts as a powerful source of disseminating information to today's youth. Companies therefore should make themselves more visible in the social media and communicate about green or eco-friendly products and practices.

- The green products sold by a company must bear adequate information about the product contents and how they benefit the environment. The study showed that only 25% of the respondents found such information adequate.
- It was alarming to find out that 37.5% of the respondents never cared to see what kind of information is carried by a green or eco-friendly product in an era marked by steep environmental consciousness.
- The study revealed that only 35.2% of the respondents have agreed to pay a higher price for green products despite knowing their benefits. Companies should try to keep a reasonable price for such products so that they are affordable to all.

- 28.1% of the respondents feel that an organization that manufacture green products and are involved in green marketing may have a competitive advantage over others who do not produce green products and adopt green practices. Whereas the above is still debatable, it should be acknowledged that green marketing requires a lot of investments in the form of technology advancements, modification of process to make them environment friendly, research and development activities and the like.
- The study reveals that the product or service itself, green tag promotion and the package are the most important factors that influence purchase intentions of the students.

Conclusion

Problems of environmental pollution and depletion of various environmental resources are forcing mankind to adopt environmentally responsible behavior. The knowledge of the environment is the first step towards such a behavioral modification. In India, the University Grants Commission has mandated Environmental Studies as a major subject in all the UG courses in order to raise awareness of the students about the environment and help them grow as responsible citizens in protecting the environment. This study was attempted to see how familiar the students were with green or eco-friendly products, their sources of obtaining information about green or eco-friendly products, the factors impacting their purchase decisions and their willingness to pay a little more for green products. Throughout the globe, people are now resorting to the use of green products that do not harm the environment and helps preserve the good elements of the environment. Similarly, organizations also are being increasingly engaged in manufacturing and marketing green products. Such positive efforts are seen both at the Governmental as well as the

corporate sectors in India. Both service and products sectors in the Indian industry are devising new ways of actively protecting the environment and making it a sustainable one.

Recommendations

- The study revealed that the respondents have low familiarity and knowledge of green or eco-friendly products, so, more campaigns by the Government promoting such products should be held. The Companies should also strengthen their green marketing strategies so that the consumers have knowledge of the presence of such products and the benefits of using them.
- Green values must be inculcated in the consumers through extensive marketing communication since personal values are an important factor between consumer perception and purchase intention.
- Colleges and Universities should stress on Environmental Education more so as to produce environmentally aware and responsible students.
- The production of a green product involves a huge cost initially; the Government should help corporates engaged in manufacturing of green products financially. This would allow them to offer products to the consumers at a reasonable price.

Limitations

The study is confined to interpretation of data collected from 128 students studying at different colleges of Kolkata, only; hence the results obtained need to be generalized cautiously.

Scope of Future Research

The above study made an attempt to know about

the familiarity, knowledge, and purchase intentions of green or eco-friendly products among the students at the UG and PG levels in different colleges. Future studies can take into account whether the knowledge of green products and purchase intentions vary according to gender, age and educational level of the respondents and finally translate into purchase intentions. The green values of the respondents can also be determined and how they affect the purchase decisions can also be arrived at in future research.

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