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A study on green purchasing behaviour of young consumers in Mettupalayam (Coimbatore District)

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Abstract

Protection of environment is an issue of key concern which has permeated into all spheres of life. Consumers are increasingly becoming concerned about the environment and various issues related to it at the global level. This change has encouraged a couple of organizations and has also compelled many organizations to respond with 'environmentally' friendly products. Green marketing is perceived as an opportunity by many organizations to achieve their long term goals. Green strategy can be effectively implemented only by persuading the consumers to buy green products. Hence the indepth study on green purchasing behaviour and their attitude towards green products is of crucial importance today. The focus on young consumers is understandable as this group is representing a new generation of consumers with a strong potential impact on green environment. Hence 130 young consumers of green products in the age group of 18–25 years in Mettupalayam (Coimbatore) are selected as sample by adopting snow ball random sampling method. The primary data are collected directly from the respondents through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data are collected from journals and websites. Statistical tools like simple percentages, weighted mean score, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Two-way ANOVA are used to analyse data. It is found from the analysis that 'Consumer Beliefs', 'Environmental Attitude', and 'Social Influence' have a positive influence on the green purchasing behaviour. The influential factor on green purchasing behaviour namely 'Consumer Beliefs', 'Environmental Attitude', 'Social Influence' and 'Quality of Products' are significantly related with the overall green purchasing behaviour of the respondents. The findings of the study also insist the importance of educating the young consumers about the green environment. Hence if the suggestions given in the study are carried out both by the marketers and the young consumers, definitely India will shine as super power in the years to come.

Keywords: Green Environment, Green Products, Young Consumers, Consumer Beliefs, Environmental Attitude, Social Influence, Quality of Products.

1. Introduction

Today, society is cluttered with marketing activities and these activities surround us constantly. Among the issues of marketing, a vital part that influences human roles and activities is 'environment' more specifically the 'green environment'. The green environment is now a leading concern for marketers. The concept of environmentalism and becoming green was not so prominent before the late 1980s. The green movement started in Great Britain; British consumers played an initial role of "Greening" movement. Company's contribution to environmental degradation and damage influenced consumers to adopt the greening movement. Thus, eco-friendly marketing concepts spread beyond the Great Britain boundary. Furthermore, some realists raised their voices about sustainable green consumerism that does not harm environment. The evolution of green marketing issues becomes more apparent since the 1990s. Thus, Green marketing is nothing but only the development and improvement of pricing, promoting and distributing the products which do not damage the environment. Therefore, marketers have to establish and communicate a strong environmental image by promoting the green purchase behaviour of the people. Moreover, it is the prime duty of each and every citizen of India to protect the environment by purchasing green products. Therefore, an indepth study is made on the intention of people to buy green products which helps to keep the environment green.

2. Review of Previous Studies

Aditya Mahaeshwari and Dr. Gunjan Malhotra (2011)^[1] in their study, "Green Marketing: a Study on Indian Youth", focused on the youth and have tried to understand the awareness

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level of green products, their perception about green products and the parameters they consider for buying green products. They also suggested that green marketing should be combined with educating the people about the benefits of purchasing green products.

Barua Promotosh and Islam Md. Sajedul (2011) [7] in their study “Young Consumers’ Purchase Intentions of Buying Green Products”, examined the young consumers’ green purchase intentions based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). At the same time, this study also intended to detect variables that influence young consumers’ intentions of buying green products. They concluded that the ‘parental influence’ was the top predictor among all the variables studied. Booi-Chen Tan and Teck-Chai Lau, (2009) [3] in their article, “Examining Sustainable Consumption Patterns of Young Consumers: Is there a cause for concern?” studied the patterns of sustainable consumption behaviour of young consumers, the results indicated that there were no significant differences between gender and courses pursued with consumers overall sustainable consumption behaviour. The findings also showed that young consumers exhibit a moderate level of sustainable consumption behaviour and concluded that there was no cause of concern for over-consumption behaviour among young consumers.

3. Importance of the Study

The growth of ecologically favourable consumer behaviour is increasing due to the present environmental degradation. Previous studies have reported that people use products and services for their physical comfort, mobility, relief from labour, enjoyment, power status, personal security, maintenance of tradition and family, etc. But now a different view is that people are now more concerned about their consumption styles. The focus of consumers has shifted towards environmental protection. As a citizen of India, everyone have the responsibility to make environment green. Hence the awareness about the importance of green environment becomes an important ingredient of green strategy. Hence the indepth study on green purchasing behaviour and their attitude towards green products is of crucial importance today.

4. Statement of the Problem

The focus on young consumers is understandable as this group is representing a new generation of consumers with a strong potential impact on the type of goods and services offered in the market. The demand for green products can vary due to differences in ethnical beliefs and people’s active participation on environmental issues. The ethnical beliefs and attitudes towards environmental friendly affairs also differ through socio economic characteristics. Among these socio-economic characteristics, ‘age’ is a strong determinant that influences consumer’s buying behaviour and buying patterns greatly. For example, old people tend to spend more time on reading and recycling than young people. On contrary, young people are more willing to participate in outdoor activities, and like to join group events. Hence they are always induced by the peer group in some way or other in almost all the purchase decision. The purchase of green products is no exception to this. Hence the study probes into young consumers’ purchase behaviour of green products. Mettupalayam (Coimbatore) is chosen as the study area since

it is a port city with many industries and export oriented units and crowded with dense population.

5. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are as per following:

- To analyse the determinants of green purchasing behaviour of the respondents.
- To find out the interrelationship between the determinants of green purchasing behaviour of the respondents.
- To examine the relationship between the determinants of green purchasing behaviour and the demographic variables of the respondents.

6. Hypotheses

- The determinants of green purchasing behaviour are not significantly related to the overall green purchasing behaviour of the respondents.
- The overall green purchasing behaviour is independent of the demographic variables of the respondents.

7. Methodology

130 young consumers of green products in the age group of 18–25 years in Thoothukudi are selected as sample by adopting snow ball random sampling method. The primary data are collected directly from the respondents through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data are collected from journals and websites.

Statistical tools like simple percentages, weighted mean score, Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation and Two-way ANOVA are used to analyse data. Likert’s five point scaling technique is used to quantify the green purchasing behaviour of the respondents

8. Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected with the help of questionnaire are analysed in three parts:

- Determinants of green purchasing behaviour
- Interrelationship between the determinants of green purchasing behaviour
- Relationship between the determinants of green purchasing behaviour and the demographic variables of the respondents.

8.1 The Determinants of Green Purchasing Behaviour of Young Consumers

The green purchasing behaviour of young consumers is influenced by many factors which are considered as the significant predictors in influencing the green purchasing intention of young consumers. The determinants of green purchasing behaviour include the following four factors:

- Consumer beliefs
- Environmental attitude
- Social influence
- Quality of green products

Six statements are framed for each influential factor with the score on overall factors to range from 6 to 30, with the neutral point of 18. The mean scores and ‘t’ value are calculated and given in Table 1.

Table 1: Determinants of Green Purchasing Behaviour

S.no	Determinants	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Variation	't' Value
1.	Consumer Beliefs	27.22	3.82	14.03	9.56
2.	Environmental Attitude	23.4	4.42	18.89	6.16
3.	Social Influence	19.85	3.73	18.74	5.66
4.	Quality of Green Products	9.36	2.33	24.89	1.75

Source: Primary data

The mean score of determinants of green purchase behaviour for 'Consumer beliefs', 'Environmental attitude' and 'Social influence' are above the neutral point. Hence these factors have a positive influence on the green purchasing behaviour. 't' values also show that they are significant at 0.05 level.

Table 2: Interrelationship between Determinants of Green Purchasing Behaviour

Determinants	Consumer Beliefs	Environmental Attitude	Social Influence	Quality of Product	Green Purchase Behaviour
Consumer Beliefs	1	0.107	-0.19	-0.61	**0.29*
Environmental Attitude		1	-0.15	-0.71	0.86
Social Influence			1	**0.46*	0.15
Quality of Product				1	-0.56
Green Purchase Behaviour					1

Source: Primary data

* - 0.05 level of significance

** - 0.01 level of significance

From Table 2, it is inferred that negative correlation exists between the pairs of determinants of green purchase behaviour, namely 'Consumer beliefs and Social influence', 'Consumer beliefs and Quality of products', 'Environmental attitude and Social influence', 'Environmental attitude and Quality of products' and 'Quality of products and Green purchasing behaviour'. Hence it may be concluded that weaker relationship exists between the above pairs of determinants of green purchasing behaviour.

It is also inferred from Table 2 that there is a high degree of correlation between the 'Environmental attitude and Green purchasing behaviour' and moderate degree of correlation between 'Social influence and Quality of products'.

It is also clear from Table 2 that the determinants namely 'Consumer beliefs and Environmental Attitude' are closely associated with the 'Overall green purchase behaviour' at 0.01 level of significance. The determinant 'Environmental attitude' had a strong association with the 'overall green purchasing behaviour' at 0.05 level of significance. But the other determinants are neither closely associated at 0.01 level nor at 0.05 level of significance with the overall green purchasing behaviour.

The inter relationship between the pairs of the determinants to green purchase behaviour namely 'Social influence and Quality of products' is proved to be significant both at 0.01 and 0.05 level.

8.3 Green Purchase Behaviour and the Demographic Variables of the Respondents

The determinants of green purchasing behaviour are related to the demographic variables of the respondents by using Two-way ANOVA. The null hypothesis framed is "The overall green purchase behaviour' is independent of the demographic variables of the respondents". The results of ANOVA are presented in Table 3.

The mean score of 9.36 for the determinant 'Quality of green products' is below the neutral point. Hence 'Quality of the green products' does not influence the green purchasing behaviour of the respondents. It is also evident from the 't' value which is insignificant at 0.05 level.

8.2 Interrelationship between the Determinants of Green Purchasing Behaviour

The interrelationship between the determinants of green purchasing behaviour is analysed with the use of Pearson's product moment correlation. The null hypothesis framed for this purpose is, "The determinants of green purchasing behaviour are not significantly associated with the overall green purchasing behaviour of the respondents". The results of Pearson's product moment correlation are given in Table 2.

Table 3: Green Purchase Behaviour and Demographic Variables of the Respondents

S.no	Demographic Variables	Calculated Values	Table Values	Inference
1.	Marital Status	4.87	4.9646	Not Significant
2.	Age	7.31	3.6823	Significant
3.	Educational Qualification	2.467	3.0984	Not Significant
4.	Size of the Family	5.3	3.6823	Significant
5.	Locality	6.0	3.6823	Significant

Source: Primary data

The calculated 'F' values for the marital status and the educational qualification of the respondents are less than the table values at 5% level of significance.

Hence it can be concluded that the overall green purchase behavior of the respondents is independent of their marital status and educational qualification.

9. Findings

- 'Consumer Beliefs', 'Environmental Attitude', and 'Social Influence' have a positive influence on the green purchasing behaviour.
- The influential factor on green purchasing behaviour namely 'Consumer Beliefs', 'Environmental Attitude' 'Social Influence' and 'Quality of Products' are significantly related with the overall green purchasing behaviour of the respondents.
- The overall green purchasing behaviour of the respondents is independent of their marital status and the educational qualification.

10. Recommendations and Suggestions

From the major findings of the study, the following suggestions are given to make the environment green:

10.1 Suggestions to Marketers

- Efficient marketing campaigns are to be arranged in order to capture the attention of young consumers and encourage them to convey important information with their peer groups.
- Since education and knowledge act as a potential background factors for young consumers' attitude formation, the marketers should deliver positive and emotional appeals to educate young consumers' product preferences.
- Marketers should conduct innovative and thought-provoking educational programmes to heighten awareness for the issues relating to green products.
- It is necessary for the marketers to dedicate their attention to educate young consumers via different knowledge constructing activities like providing free samples along with aligning knowledge constructing competition for pioneering ideas.

10.2 Suggestions to Young Consumers

- Young Consumers Forum is to be formed and the members of the forum are to be educated through awareness programmes like seminars, symposiums etc.
- Young consumers should be made aware of the benefits of using green products like cost savings, eco-friendly nature etc.
- Young consumers should participate in the knowledge building activities like forest camp, field trips, tree plantations etc. arranged by the marketers which is solely meant to point out the importance of green environment.
- Young consumers should be made to realize their prominent and effective role concerning the environmental issues.

11. Conclusion

In order to make the dream of a 'Green Prosperous India' to be true, the country will have to rely on its most valuable asset namely its youth. Global issues are not solved within the four walls of a scientist's laboratory. They need to be brought to the knowledge of an average individual and informing youth is the best way to begin. Many of the best ideas come from young minds; the Indian youth is, and must be, the builder of a new society. The findings of the study also insist the importance of educating the young consumers about the green environment. Hence if the aforesaid suggestions are carried out both by the marketers and the young consumers, definitely India will shine as super power in the years to come.

12. Limitations

- The findings and suggestions of this study may not be suitable to all respondents since it is based on the opinions and views of 130 respondents only.
- The snow ball random sampling method used in the selection of sample may affect the accuracy of the data.

13. Scope for Further Research

The consumers in India are showing a positive response towards green products and services. Hence future research studies may concentrate on the impact of green strategies so as to develop the concept of 'going green' as the young consumers are the supporting pillars of the future nation.

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