

CONSUMERISM IN INDIA

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“Awareness of Green products among Urban Residents in Coimbatore”

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Abstract

Consumer behavior focuses on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources on consumption-related items. Meeting the needs of the consumer is the primary challenge that every marketer faces. Certain products were found to be harmful to the earth's atmosphere. The products which would cause less or no damage to the environment as called green products. The study determines to find out the level of awareness on green products amongst urban residents of Coimbatore. A survey was conducted to gather the responses through interview schedule from sample respondents with the main objective is to explore the awareness of consumer towards eco-friendly products. The primary data were collected from 100 respondents who were selected based on simple random sampling method, from the customer data base of a specialty shop dealing green products in Coimbatore and telephonic interviews were conducted. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square test. The demographic characteristics of consumer behavior were examined and associated with their level of awareness about eco-friendly products. It was found that there is a need for green product advertising, especially the government to improve on their message delivery, information about the significance of environmental consciousness for the urban residents to respond and reflect in their buying behavior.

Key words: *Urban Residents, Green products, eco-friendly products*

Introduction

Green consumption is the process of avoiding products which are likely to: Endanger the health of consumers or others, significantly damage the environment in production, use or disposal, consume disproportionately large amounts of resources during production, use or disposal, cause unnecessary waste through over packaging, excess product features or unduly short lifespan, Use materials derived from endangered species or environments.

A consumer with environmental awareness can be defined as “an ecologist who had grasped his/her self-efficacy against environmental pollution and how has a sense of responsibility with respect to future generations and the whole humanity in his/her use of resources. When environmental pollution and awareness of environmental protection increase, they affect consumer buying behavior (Aysel Boztepe1 2012). Conscious consumers with environmental awareness can assess the presence of environmental resources, their cost of use as well as the impact of this use to the environment and to themselves (Babaogul and Ozgun,2008).

Marketing plays a vital role in the growth and development of a country irrespective of its size and population. Energy is required for sustaining all forms of life on the earth and green products are the basic need of a man for his survival. There is a need for current and upcoming green advertising, especially ones that are done by the government to improve on their message delivery, creativity and information for the youth to respond in practice

Statement of the Problem

At present the consumers are more dynamic. Their taste, needs and preference are changing now and then the consumers now look for product differentiation and the giving importance to health and environmental conscious. The consumer has certain expectation from the products in terms of its quality, price, taste and its environmental friendliness. Companies’ concentration on advertisement makes the consumer to get awareness about the latest green brands in the market.

Though there are many companies manufacturing and supplying eco-friendly green products, the consumers are not having awareness about the products which are certified green. An empirical study was attempted to find out the level of awareness on green products among residents in urban areas of Coimbatore.

Review of Literature

Panni (2006) found, that the more the consumers are aware regarding the societal and environmental issues the more they are involved in pro-social and pro-environmental behavior. Government should focus on increasing awareness & knowledge among the consumers to accept the environment friendly products.

Rinal Shah*Preeti Pillai, 2012.** The success of any product is determined by the worth of that product in relation to the competing products. Development of a particular product depends on the support and awareness of the consumers. So, the producers to maintain the marketability of their product should make necessary efforts by giving advertisements in various media.

Objectives of the Study

The Objectives of this study are:

- To examine the level of awareness of consumers about various Green Products.
- To find out the factors influencing the consumers to choose the Green Products.
- To offer suggestions for improving the level of awareness of consumers about various green products.

Hypotheses

In order to find the awareness of consumer's awareness for purchasing of green products, the hypothesis was framed; there is no significant relationship between the personal variables of the respondents such as age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, occupation, annual income and level of awareness on green products.

Methodology

Coimbatore city was considered as the locale of the study. This study is an empirical research based on survey method. For this study primary data were collected through interview schedule. The sample respondents were the heads of the households who are the buyers of goods for household needs. A sample size of 100 respondents was selected based on simple random sampling method, from the customer data base of a specialty shop dealing green products in Coimbatore and telephonic interviews were conducted to gather the required data. The Cronbach alpha test of reliability indicated the data reliability of 0.897. The data collected from the primary sources were analyzed with the help of various statistical measures like ranking and arithmetic means. To test the hypothesis, Chi-square analysis was used.

Distribution of Respondents According to their Level of Awareness about the Green Products

To measure the level of awareness on importance of buying green products, the respondents were asked to give their opinion on a Likert scale. The mean score computed is presented in Table 1

Table 1
Mean score on importance of buying green products

| FACTORS | Mean Score | | | | |
|-----------------|------------|------|------|------|------|
| | Healthy | 3.5 | 0.8 | 0 | 0.1 |
| Safety | 4 | 0.28 | 0.15 | 0.08 | 0.04 |
| Energy saver | 3.3 | 0.96 | 0.06 | 0.1 | 0.03 |
| Quality of life | 3.9 | 0.4 | 0 | 0.12 | 0.04 |
| Educative value | 3.5 | 0.48 | 0.21 | 0.1 | 0.06 |
| Ethical affects | 3.4 | 0.6 | 0.15 | 0.14 | 0.05 |

It is understood from table 1 that majority of the respondents strongly agreed on the benefits of using green products that it promotes health on consumption, safety to use green products are energy savers, it enhanced quality of life and it brings about value and also brings about ethical affects. Based on the mean score computed the respondents were further classified with respect to their level of awareness of importance of green products. The mean score above 3 considered as "high awareness" and the mean score below 3 was considered as "low awareness".

The table 2 shows the distribution of total respondents based on their level of awareness.

Table 2
Age and Level of Awareness on Green Products

Age of the respondents determines their level of awareness on green products. The Table 3 shows that the level of awareness of customers about green products on the basis of age of the sample respondents.

Distribution of Sample Respondents by their Age and Level of Awareness

| Age (In Years) | Level of Awareness | | Total No. of Respondents |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| Upto 20 | 21(60) | 14(40) | 35(100) |
| Between 21-50 | 40(77) | 12(23) | 52(100) |
| Above 50 | 11(85) | 2(15) | 13(100) |
| TOTAL | 72(72) | 28(28) | 100(100) |

$$\chi^2 \text{ value} = 4.151$$

Null hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between age and the level of awareness about green products.

As calculated value χ^2 (4.151) is less than the table value of χ^2 (5.99) at 5 per cent level of significance, null hypothesis is accepted and the level of awareness of the respondents about green products has no association with the age of the sample respondents.

Table 4
Gender and level of Awareness

Distribution of Sample Respondents by their Gender and Level of Awareness

| Gender | Level of Awareness | | Total No. of Respondents |
|--------|--------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| Male | 20(80) | 5(20) | 25(100) |
| Female | 52(69) | 23(31) | 75(100) |
| TOTAL | 72(72) | 28(28) | 100(100) |

$$\chi^2 \text{ value} = 1.058$$

Chi-square test has been applied.

The calculated value of χ^2 (1.058) is less than the table value of χ^2 (3.84) at 5 per cent level of significance and the null hypothesis is accepted.

It could be concluded that the level of awareness of the respondents about green products has no association with the Gender of the respondents.

Table 5
Marital Status and level of Awareness

The Table 4 shows that the level of awareness of customers about green products on the basis of marital status of the sample respondents.

Distribution of Sample Respondents by their Marital Status and Level of Awareness

| Marital Status | Level of awareness | | Total No. of Respondents |
|----------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| Married | 44(71) | 18(29) | 62(100) |
| Unmarried | 28(74) | 10(26) | 38(100) |
| TOTAL | 72(72) | 28(28) | 100(100) |

$$\chi^2 \text{ value} = 0.086$$

Null hypothesis: there is no significant relationship between marital status and level of awareness on green products.

The calculated value of χ^2 (0.086) is less than the table value of χ^2 (3.84) at 5 per cent level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant association prevailing between the marital status of the sample respondents and the level of awareness on green products.

Table 6

Educational Qualification and level of Awareness

The Table 6 shows that the level of awareness of customers about green products on the basis of Educational qualification of the sample respondents.

Distribution of Sample Respondents by their Educational Qualification and Level of Awareness

| Educational Qualification | Level of awareness | | Total No. of Respondents |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| School | 3(50) | 3(50) | 6(100) |
| Graduate | 42(86) | 7(14) | 49(100) |
| Post graduate | 27(60) | 18(40) | 45(100) |
| TOTAL | 72(72) | 28(28) | 100(100) |

χ^2 value =9.22

It is found that majority of the sample respondents who are graduates have high level of awareness than the other respondents. The null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the educational qualification of the sample respondents and their level of awareness. The calculated value of χ^2 (9.22) is greater than the table value of χ^2 (5.99) at 5 per cent level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

It could be concluded that the level of awareness on green products are significantly associated with the educational qualification of the sample respondents.

Table 7

Occupation and level of Awareness on Green Products

The Table 7 shows that the level of awareness of customers about green products on the basis of occupation of the sample respondents.

Distribution of Sample Respondents by their Occupation and Level of Awareness

| Occupation | Level of Awareness | | Total No. of Respondents |
|-------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| Agriculture | 7(54) | 6(46) | 13(100) |
| Business | 15(88) | 2(12) | 17(100) |
| Profession | 26(79) | 7(21) | 33(100) |
| Employment | 24(65) | 13(35) | 37(100) |
| TOTAL | 72(72) | 28(28) | 100(100) |

$$\chi^2 \text{value} = 6.036$$

Null hypothesis: there is no significant relationship between occupation and level of awareness on green products.

The calculated value of χ^2 (6.036) is less than the table value of χ^2 (7.81) at 5 per cent level of significance.

It could be concluded that the level of awareness has no association with the occupation of the sample respondents.

Table 8

Annual Income and level of awareness

The Table 8 shows that the level of awareness of customers about green products on the basis of annual income of the sample respondents.

Distribution of Sample Respondents by their Annual Income and Level of Awareness

| Annual Income | Level of Awareness | | Total No. of Respondents |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| Upto Rs.1,00,000 | 22(59) | 15(41) | 37(100) |
| Rs.1,00,001 to Rs.3,00,000 | 35(76) | 11(24) | 46(100) |
| Above Rs.3,00,000 | 15(88) | 2(12) | 17(100) |
| TOTAL | 72(72) | 28(28) | 100(100) |

$$\chi^2 \text{value} = 5.490$$

Null hypothesis: there is no significant association between income and level of awareness.

The calculated value of χ^2 (5.490) is greater than the table value of χ^2 (5.99) at 5 per cent level of significance. Therefore, the above hypothesis is accepted.

It is concluded that the level of awareness on green products has no association with the income of the sample respondents have no significant association with their level of awareness on green products.

- **Choice Criteria in Selecting Green Products**
- The following table 9 exhibits that the choice criteria in selecting green products . A simple ranking analysis has been applied.

Table 9

Choice criteria in selecting green products

| CHOICE CRITERIA | SCORE | RANK |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Technical (product specific) | 612 | IV |
| Economical (price) | 472 | VII |
| Social benefits | 724 | I |
| Risk reduction | 496 | VI |
| Convenience | 581 | V |
| Quality | 641 | III |
| Emotions | 478 | VIII |
| Availability | 446 | IX |
| Life style | 705 | II |
| Packing | 345 | X |

The Table 9 exhibits that Social benefit is the important choice criteria of the sample respondents with the ranking score of 724 than the other choice criteria and the next choice criteria of the sample respondents takes place with the ranking score of 705. Risk reduction is next factor followed by price.

Suggestions

- Awareness level of the customers in the age of below 20 is lesser than any other groups. Hence, it is suggested that the Green product manufacturers should focus on giving advertising in the new Media. By doing so, the young customers could turn their attention towards green products.

- Between the gender, female are having high level of awareness than male. Hence, it is suggested that Green product manufacturers should improve the awareness of Male.
- In order to improve the awareness about the green products, Government should take some measures and insist the people to use the green products.

Conclusion

An informative communication strategy might be an obvious choice for environmental marketer. Well designed advertising can succeed in informing consumers about environmental issues, and can help to raise awareness and improve understanding. An important communications challenge for green advertisers is to help their customers to make the links between the causes and effects of environmental and social problems, their potential solution and products and providers.

Provides booklets containing hints for using green products. Has the potential to deal with the problems of covering green issues than advertisement.

A key area where companies are getting involved is in sponsoring and facilitating environmental education in schools.

Indian consumers are showing a strong interest in new and good quality Green products. As a result, a number of Indian companies have given birth to new brands of Green products coupled with the entry of many multinational corporations. A good future is waiting for these products because people aspire for using the products at best standards.

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