

**GREEN MARKETING AS A TOOL FOR CONSUMER AWARENESS,  
PERCEPTION AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR -A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Green marketing has now evolved as one of the major areas of interest for marketers as it may provide competitive advantages. It requires investment in terms of technology enhancement, process modification, communicating benefits to customers, etc. Many of the companies in India have now started marketing themselves as green organizations due to certain government regulations and shift in the preference of the consumers worldwide. However, not much research concerning green marketing has been done in India and there is a question about the awareness of green products among consumers. The attitude of consumers towards green products and the relationship between attitude and behavior is also questionable. As green marketing is different from marketing in the traditional way, marketers need to know the factors that persuade the consumer to buy green products.*

**Keywords: Green marketing, Eco friendly, Ecological Marketing, Green products.**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The business world is becoming more socially responsible, the consumers are also changing their attitudes as they shift from buying conventional products to Eco-friendly/green products. Due to this transition and excessive competition, it has become pivotal for marketers to formulate the marketing strategies in line with consumer attitudes to be successful. Research is scarce in the extent of literature which particularly focuses on the factors and other drivers which lead a consumer towards the buying of green products.

Green marketing has gained tremendous attention worldwide because of environmental deterioration which leads to global problems. It is also observed that companies have started using green marketing for various reasons like social responsibility, green policies, etc. Recently, concerns have been expressed by manufacturers and customers about the environmental impact of products. Consumers and manufacturers have directed their attention toward environment-friendly products that are presumed to be “green” or environment-friendlies like low power consuming (energy-efficient) electrical appliances, organic foods, lead-free paints, recyclable paper, and phosphate-free detergents. Indian marketers are also realizing the importance of the green marketing concept. Although a variety of research on green marketing has been conducted across the globe; little academic research on consumer perception and preferences has been carried out in India. This paper provides a brief review of environmental issues and identifies the green values of the consumers, their level of awareness about environmental issues, green products, and practices.

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Businesses need to constantly assess the latest and most attractive marketing trends. Marketing trends can be found out by continually researching the changes in consumer behavior in the marketplace. By identifying the changes in consumer behavior, businesses can modify their offering to consumers. Consumers today are more concerned about environmental degradation and the negative impact of their uses of products and services on the environment. The reason for this concern could be visible climatic changes, global warming, and increasing air and water pollution. Thus, using green marketing by the organizations not only provides an opportunity to meet consumer expectations and address their environmental concerns but also to gain a competitive advantage and a strong consumer base.

Today, the Earth faces more environmental issues than ever before, hence companies must make and market themselves as environmentally friendly. Green marketing is emerging as a popular promotional strategy owing to increased consumer awareness and concerns. Green marketing is also termed as **environmental marketing** or **ecological marketing**. According to the **American Marketing Association**, marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe is called Green Marketing. Thus a wide range of activities is covered under green marketing, which includes modifying the product, making changes in the production process and packaging, as well as modifying advertising or removing any activity that negatively impacts the environment.

The concept of green or ecological marketing calls upon businesses to follow ethical and green practices while dealing with customers, suppliers, dealers, and employees. Companies have started marketing themselves as green companies. Even the Public Sector Units and state governments are now paying a lot of attention to environmental issues such as global warming, pollution, or water contamination and have started taking steps to prevent environmental pollution.

This paper highlights the consumers' perceptions and awareness of green marketing practices and products. Research has given good insights for marketers of green products and suggests the need for designing the marketing communication campaigns promoting green products due to high green value among the consumers.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Various studies support the assertion that consumers today prefer environmentally safe products and have a positive disposition towards companies following such practices. A strong willingness is shown by consumers to favor environmentally conscious products and companies as per various opinion polls taken in the US and elsewhere, however, action to do so, in reality, is debatable (**Mendleson N, Polonsky M J, 1995**).

**Henion and Kinnear (1976)** defined green consumers as environmentally conscious consumers. **Antil (1984)** described green consumerism as a specific type of socially conscious consumer behavior with a prime focus on the protection of the environment. Green consumerism was described as a form of "pro-social" consumer behavior (**Weiner and Doescher, 1991**). **Michael Polonsky (1994)** defined "green marketing as the marketing that consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with a minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment."

Despite huge interest in green marketing by researchers and organizations, the demand for green products is not as high as expected. **Mintel (1995)** found a significant gap between consumers' concern and actual green purchasing. It is found that still there are considerable barriers towards the diffusion of more ecologically oriented consumption styles. According to **Michael J Polonsky**, environmental marketing has been perceived as an opportunity by the organizations to achieve their objectives (**Keller 1987, Shearer 1990**). It was believed that organizations have a moral obligation to serve the society in a more environmentally friendly way (**Davis 1992, Freeman and Liedtka 1991, Keller 1987, Shearer 1990**).

Firms are also forced to become more socially responsible due to the laws laid by the government towards the protection of the environment. Firms are also pressurized by the environmental activities adapted by competitors that demand the firms change their marketing activities to environmental marketing activities. One of the factors identified that affects the purchase of a green product is its high price in comparison with the traditional product.

The price of the product can be reduced by properly designed environmental standards. Environmental standards can trigger innovations that lower the cost of the product or improve its value. Such innovation will allow the companies to use a range of inputs more productively—from raw materials to energy to labor – thus offsetting the cost of improving environmental impact and hence enhanced resource productivity will make companies more competitive. Innovation will play a lead role in sustainable development for the companies to be competitive and resisting innovations will lead to loss of competitiveness in today's global economy (**Michael Porter and Claas van der Linder, 1995**).

**Jacquelyn Ottman, (1998)** suggests that from an organizational standpoint, all aspects of marketing including new product development and communications should be integrated with environmental considerations. It has been always asserted that the actions of individuals can be predicted by their attitudes. Several studies have been made towards improving the ability to predict an individual's actions. **Davidson et al. (1985)** found that the consumers' attitude is associated with the knowledge and personal experience they possess. However, inconsistencies were found among the relationship between consumers' attitude and their behavior when it comes to green consumerism.

**Mainieri et al. (1997)** found a low correlation between consumers' attitudes and green behavior. Previous researches also proved a low correlation between consumers' attitudes and their green behavior (**Tracy and Oskamp, 1984**). **Spruyt et al. (2007)** suggested that the prediction of an individual's behavior is dependent on the attitude of the consumer. Consumers are substantially aware of green products; however applying green marketing practices in business operations is not an easy task (**Juwaheer, 2005**). **Antonio et al (2009)** suggested that due to environmental consciousness that has evolved, studies on green consumerism will be the main focus point in the future leading to identifying the consumer attitudes, behaviors, and intentions.

**Research Objectives:**

The purpose of this paper is to understand the perception of the consumer towards the purchase predispositions for green or eco-friendly products. This paper attempts to explore how consumer behavior is affected by green marketing practices of the marketers and to find whether or not the understanding of the advantages of using green products affects their product purchase decision. This paper is designed to gain an understanding of Indian consumers' attitudes towards green marketing or the consumption of products that support environmental protection. More specifically, the study aims to fulfill the following research objectives:

- To know how Green marketing is perceived by consumers.
- To study if Green/eco-friendly products influence consumers more positively towards their purchase in comparison to conventional products.
- To investigate the factors which lead a consumer towards the purchase of Green products.

**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CUSTOMER INFLUENCE TO BUY GREEN PRODUCTS :****1.Responsiveness towards Green Products :**

Nowadays, consumers are concerned about green marketing practices. Consumers are more concerned about environmental degradation and the negative impact of their uses of products and services on the environment. The reason for this concern could be visible climatic changes, global warming, and increasing air and water pollution. Thus, using green marketing provides an opportunity for marketers to meet consumer expectations and address their environmental concerns to win an environmentally-conscious consumer base.

**2.Consumer Perception about Green Products :**

Organizations with green claims are concerned about the environment. This implies that consumers are not skeptical about the green claims of the organizations. Consumers' agreement regarding environmental degradation was high and may 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. This suggests that consumers are concerned about the state of the environment and expect the organizations to employ green practices towards the protection of the environment.

**3.Brand Association:**

The following brands were recalled as being associated with Green Marketing Practices including Bajaj CFL, Suzlon Windmills, Indian Railways (paperless ticket), Nokia, Philips CFL, Nerolac Paints, Exide Green Batteries, etc. This has marketing implications in terms of the requirement of extensive communication by the marketers to make the consumers aware of the green brands. 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.

#### 4. Consumers Action:

They have a preference for green products over conventional products while purchasing. Consumers consider the ill effect of the manufacturing and consumption on the natural environment and the price of the green product affects their purchase behavior. As consumers consider the ill effects of manufacturing and consumption on the natural environment it can be said that following green marketing practices not only lead to social good but also make good business sense. The marketers have to extensively market and communicate the availability of green products to the consumers.

**Findings:** The present study indicates that the knowledge and understanding of the consumer on green marketing has a positive impact on their purchase preference for eco-friendly and environmentally safe products. There exists an optimistic influence on consumer attitudes for buying those products which are non-hazardous to our environment. This paper is a useful source of information for green marketers about what is the consumers' perspective on green marketing.

#### CONCLUSION:

The concluding part of the paper presents important discussion and outlines the scope and possibilities that can be leveraged by marketers through the understanding of consumers' outlook towards green products. Consumers are not skeptical about green claims of the organizations and consumers are concerned about the present and future state of the environment signifying the 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 consumers may prefer green products over conventional products to protect the environment. Concerns were more directed towards the depletion of Ozone and Global Warming. The consumers are concerned about the state of the environment and expect the organizations to employ green practices towards the protection of the environment. The results imply durable manufacturers especially to practice green marketing.

Thus, using green marketing by the organizations not only provides an opportunity to meet consumer expectations and address their environmental concerns but also to gain a competitive advantage and a strong consumer base. Marketers need to constantly assess the latest and most attractive marketing trends. Marketing trends can be found out by continually researching the changes in consumer behavior in the marketplace. It is observed that younger consumers are more active supporters and buyers of eco – friendly products therefore special products and promotional campaigns can be designed with a special focus on the younger generation.

#### Limitations:

A major limitation of this study is that only a conceptual analysis method of research is used. Future studies should include the use of qualitative /quantitative analysis to obtain more robust findings. Also to generalize the result including a diverse population and not limiting to a particular region would be helpful.

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