

Consumers' Attitude towards Green Products - An Exploratory Study in Erode District

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Abstract

Increasing awareness on the various environmental problems has led a shift in the way consumers go about their life. There has been a change in consumer attitudes towards a green lifestyle. People are actively trying to reduce their impact on the environment. This is not widespread and is still evolving. However, organizations and business have seen this change in consumer attitudes and are trying to gain an edge in the competitive market by exploiting the potential in the green market industry. In this regard, the present study investigates the relationship between selected independent variables and consumers' attitude towards green products. A conceptual framework is presented and the information is analyzed on the basis of the framework.

Introduction

The past decades witness to the rapid economic growth through increasing consumers' consumption worldwide. This in turn causes environmental deterioration through over-consumption and utilization of natural resources. The consequences of environmental degradation are global warming, depletion of stratospheric ozone layer, pollution of sea and rivers, noise and light pollution, acid rain and desertification. About 40 percent of environmental degradation has been brought about by the consumption activities of private households. As the environment continues to worsen, it has become a persistent public concern in developed countries. Furthermore, it also awakens developing countries to the green movement for preservation of the environment. Creating customer satisfaction and building long-term profitable customer relationship are some of the primary objectives firms try to achieve to sustain their businesses in the competitive business world.

With an increase in the social and political pressures, many firms embraced green marketing strategies and exploited these environmental issues as a source of competitive advantage. Profit driven firms are usually motivated to adopt the concept of green marketing in their businesses provided that consumers demonstrate a high degree of environmental attitude and hence translate this into environmental friendly purchasing commitment. Hence, many companies started to be more socially responsive in addressing pollution and waste disposal by developing environmentally friendly packaging and putting in numerous efforts to keep in-step with the environmental movement. However, some of the greatest challenges faced by these firms are changes in consumer preferences, suspicion of green advertising claim, unfavorable consumer perception of green products and the high cost invested in developing green products. As a result, it is vital to explore how consumers view the environmental issues, and how they behave, especially in their attitudes towards green products or environmental friendly products.

Excerpts from Previous Studies

Mertcan Tascioglu and Faiza Rehman (2016) studied about the consumers' attitudes towards green marketing and convenience. The study revealed that the green marketing practices and convenience had a positive effect on consumer behavior but convenience had positively moderated the relationship between green marketing practices and willingness to buy, attitude towards company and consumer commitment. Further, it was found that an increase in convenience leads to a higher increase in willingness to buy, attitude towards company, and

consumer commitment than green marketing practices. It was suggested that the managers need to formulate strategies focusing on not only green marketing practices but also the convenience, as it is more important for consumers.

Sangeeta Gupta et al.,(2014) analysed the consumer attitude and awareness towards green marketing and green branding. It was revealed that the people were aware of green environment because it was less detrimental to the environment and companies can look into implementation of this concept for betterment of business. Further, the study found that the consumers strongly expressed that they were familiar with green brand and shown interest to know more about green branding. It was concluded that most of the consumers realize the importance of green branding which means that there is a positive sign for betterment of the environment as well as for business.

Statement of the Problem

Environmental sustainability is difficult to ignore, so business organizations have to recognize the competitive advantages and business opportunities to be gained from green marketing although it may cost to the organization. Consumers are ready to adapt green product and try to understand the green markets. Today, marketing in Asia particularly, India use environment friendly product packaging and modify the products to minimize the environment pollution. However, there is a big argument among the marketing philosophers regarding consumers' attitude towards green product in developing country like India. With this background, the researcher has made an attempt to analyze the consumers' attitude towards green products in Erode district. The study provides answer for the following questions:

- 1) How is the consumers' attitude towards green products?
- 2) What are the problems faced by the consumers on usage of green products?

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To study the attitude among the consumers towards green products in Erode district.
- 2) To know the problems faced by the consumers on usage of green products.

Research Methodology

A study on consumers' attitude towards green products has been limited to the buying respondents located in Erode district only. In order to realize the objectives, the primary data is used. The required primary data have been collected through a survey method from the respondents during the months of April 2016 to September 2016. The judgment sampling technique was employed in the selection of the sample. The number of items selected from the total population constitutes the sample size. A sample of 100 respondents was selected to carry out the present study in Erode district. Besides the primary data, the secondary data were also collected from various sources to make highlights on green products. The statistical tools such as Correlation and Henry Garret Ranking were used for the present study.

Limitations of the Study

- This research concentrate on the consumer point of view only as it is often the case in previous studies about green attitudes and purchase behaviors.
- No focus on durable goods as the decision making process is more complex and the purchase of these products is not so frequent.
- The research approach is on tangible products that consumers regularly buy and which have a short life expectancy.

Findings of the Study

Consumers' Attitude towards Green Products: Percentage Analysis (Table1.1)

Opinion of the respondents regarding the attitude towards green perceived quality, green perceived risk, green satisfaction and green trust

S. No.	Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
	Green Perceived Quality					
	Best benchmark with respect to environmental concern	228 (35.1%)	268 (41.2%)	110 (16.9%)	35 (5.4%)	9 (1.4%)
	Reliable with respect to environmental consideration	115 (17.7%)	321 (49.4%)	161 (24.8%)	39 (6.0%)	14 (2.2%)
	Durable with respect to environmental performance	128 (19.7%)	247 (38.0%)	200 (30.8%)	56 (8.6%)	19 (2.9%)
	Excellent with respect to environmental image	133 (20.5%)	222 (34.2%)	172 (26.5%)	95 (14.6%)	28 (4.3%)
	Professional with respect to environmental reputation	112 (17.2%)	234 (36.0%)	159 (24.5%)	74 (11.4%)	71 (10.9%)
	Green Perceived Risk					
	There is a chance that there will be something wrong with environmental performance of eco-friendly product	205 (31.5%)	246 (37.8%)	114 (17.5%)	60 (9.2%)	25 (3.8%)
	Eco-friendly product will not work properly with respect to its environmental design	97 (14.9%)	290 (44.6%)	157 (24.2%)	88 (13.5%)	18 (2.8%)
	Would get environmental penalty or loss if use eco-friendly product	111 (17.1%)	183 (28.2%)	209 (32.2%)	122 (18.8%)	25 (3.8%)
	Using eco-friendly product will negatively affect the environment	107 (16.5%)	198 (30.5%)	133 (20.5%)	151 (23.2%)	61 (9.4%)
	Using eco-friendly product would damage green reputation or image	99 (15.2%)	187 (28.8%)	132 (20.3%)	137 (21.1%)	95 (14.6%)
	Green Satisfaction					
	Glad about the decision to select eco-friendly product because of its environmental image	205 (31.5%)	283 (43.5%)	117 (18.0%)	34 (5.2%)	11 (1.7%)
	Think that it is a right	146	286	145	55	18

S. No.	Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
	decision to purchase eco-friendly product because of its environmental functionality	(22.5%)	(44.0%)	(22.3%)	(8.5%)	(2.8%)
13.	Overall, happy to purchase this product because it is environmental friendly	192 (29.5%)	242 (37.2%)	137 (21.1%)	57 (8.8%)	22 (3.4%)
	Satisfied with eco-friendly product because of its environmental performance	157 (24.2%)	250 (38.5%)	165 (25.4%)	52 (8.0%)	26 (4.0%)
	Green Trust					
	Believe that eco-friendly product's environmental image is generally reliable	219 (33.7%)	245 (37.7%)	124 (19.1%)	45 (6.9%)	17 (2.6%)
	Think that eco-friendly product's environmental functionality is generally dependable	126 (19.4%)	268 (41.2%)	179 (27.5%)	63 (9.7%)	14 (2.2%)
	Overall, believe that eco-friendly product's environmental claims are trustworthy	153 (23.5%)	222 (34.2%)	180 (27.7%)	74 (11.4%)	21 (3.2%)
	Eco-friendly product's environmental performance meets the expectations	148 (22.8%)	230 (35.4%)	163 (25.1%)	79 (12.2%)	30 (4.6%)
	Eco-friendly product keeps promises for environmental improvement	126 (19.4%)	240 (36.9%)	161 (24.8%)	77 (11.8%)	46 (7.1%)

An attempt has been made to know the consumers' attitude towards green products; it has been classified into nineteen statements under four heads such as green perceived quality, green perceived risk, green satisfaction and green trust.

It is found that 49.4 per cent of the respondents' attitude towards green perceived quality as 'reliable with respect to environmental consideration'. Further, 44.6 per cent of the respondents' attitude towards green perceived risk as 'eco-friendly product will not work properly with respect to its environmental design'. 44 per cent of the respondents' attitude towards green satisfaction as 'thinks that it is a right decision to purchase eco-friendly product because of its environmental functionality'. On the other hand, 41.2 per cent of the respondents' attitude towards green trust as 'thinks that eco-friendly product's environmental functionality is generally dependable'. It is found from the analysis that majority (49.4%) of the respondents' attitude towards green perceived quality as 'reliable with respect to environmental consideration'.

Degree of Relationship between Selected Independent Variables and Attitude towards Green Perceived Quality – Correlation Analysis (Table 1.2)

No.	Independent variables	'r' value	'p' value
1.	Age	0.142	0.000*
2.	Educational Qualification	0.067	0.088 ^{NS}
3.	Family Monthly Income	0.055	0.159 ^{NS}
4.	Family Size	0.036	0.364 ^{NS}
5.	Amount spent for purchase green products	-0.077	0.050**
6.	Period of using green products	-0.131	0.001*

Note: * - Significant at 1% level, ** - Significant at 5% level, NS – Not Significant

An attempt has been made to examine the relationship between the selected independent variables and the dependent variable, attitude towards green perceived quality, by using correlation analysis. The independent variables are age, educational qualification, family monthly income, family size, amount spent for purchase green products and period of using green products. The goal of the correlation analysis is to observe as to what extent the selected independent variables predict the dependent variables attitude towards green perceived quality.

It is found that the selected independent variables affect the attitude towards green perceived quality. It is observed that among the six selected independent factors, only one factor age is having positive correlation with the attitude towards green perceived quality in the study area. The variables "amount spent for purchase green products" and "period of using green products" are having negative association. On the other hand, the variables- "educational qualification", family monthly income and family size are not associated with the attitude towards green perceived quality in the study area. It is found that whenever the age increases their attitude towards green perceived quality also positively increases. Further, whenever the amount spent for purchase green products and period of using green products increase their attitude towards green perceived quality decreases.

Degree of Relationship between Selected Independent Variables and Attitude towards Green Perceived Risk - Correlation Analysis (Table 1.3)

No.	Independent variables	'r' value	'p' value
1.	Age	-0.101	0.010*
2.	Educational Qualification	0.085	0.031**
3.	Family Monthly Income	0.014	0.727 ^{NS}
4.	Family Size	0.057	0.149 ^{NS}
5.	Amount spent for purchase green products	0.046	0.243 ^{NS}
6.	Period of using green products	0.058	0.141 ^{NS}

Note: * - Significant at 1% level, ** - Significant at 5% level, NS – Not Significant

With a view to find the relationship between selected independent variables of the sample respondents and their attitude towards green perceived risk, correlation analysis has been employed in this section.

It is inferred that the selected independent variables affect the attitude towards green perceived risk. It is observed that among the six selected independent factors, only one factor viz. educational qualification is having positive correlation with the attitude towards green perceived risk in the study area. The variable age is having negative association. On the other hand, the variables family monthly income, family size, amount spent for purchase green products and period of using green products are not associated with the attitude towards green perceived risk in the study area. It is found that whenever the educational qualification increases their attitude towards green perceived risk also positively increases. Further, whenever the age increases their attitude towards green perceived risk decreases.

Degree of Relationship between Selected Independent Variables and Attitude towards Green Satisfaction - Correlation Analysis (Table1.4)

No.	Independent variables	'r' value	'p' value
1.	Age	0.074	0.059 ^{NS}
2.	Educational Qualification	0.021	0.601 ^{NS}
3.	Family Monthly Income	0.009	0.812 ^{NS}
4.	Family Size	-0.013	0.745 ^{NS}
5.	Amount spent for purchase green products	-0.172	0.000*
6.	Period of using green products	-0.127	0.001*

Note: * - Significant at 1% level, NS – Not Significant

An attempt has been made to examine the relationship between the selected independent variables and the dependent variable attitude towards green satisfaction by using correlation analysis.

It is determined that how the selected independent variables affect the attitude towards green satisfaction. It is observed that among the six selected independent factors, two factors viz., amount spent for purchase green products and period of using green products are having negative association. On the other hand, the variables age, educational qualification, family monthly income and family size are not associated with the attitude towards green satisfaction in the study area. It is found that whenever the amount spent for purchase of green products and period of using green products increase their attitude towards green satisfaction decreases.

Degree of Relationship between Selected Independent Variables and Attitude towards Green Trust - Correlation Analysis (Table1.5)

No.	Independent variables	'r' value	'p' value
1.	Age	0.072	0.068 ^{NS}
2.	Educational Qualification	0.076	0.053 ^{NS}
3.	Family Monthly Income	-0.026	0.516 ^{NS}
4.	Family Size	0.003	0.936 ^{NS}
5.	Amount spent for purchase green products	-0.138	0.000*
6.	Period of using green products	-0.120	0.002*

Note: * - Significant at 1% level, NS – Not Significant

With a view to find the relationship between selected independent variables of the sample respondents and their attitude towards green trust, correlation analysis has been employed in this section.

It is examined from the above table that how the selected independent variables affect the attitude towards green trust. It is observed that among the six selected independent factors, two factors viz., "amount spent for purchase green products" and "period of using green products" are having negative association. On the other hand, the variables age, educational qualification, family monthly income and family size are not associated with the attitude towards green trust in the study area. It is found that whenever the amount spent for purchase of green products and period of using green products increase their attitude towards green trust decreases.

Problems Faced by the Consumers on Usage of Green Products: Henry Garrett Ranking Technique (Table 1.6)

No.	Problems	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
1	High price	38861	59.79	I
2	Non-availability of Product varieties	31564	48.56	IX
3	Non-availability of resources for using Green products	38696	59.53	II
4	Poor after sale service	36238	55.75	IV
5	Poor customer relationship	34401	52.92	VI
6	Duplicate products	36596	56.30	III
7	Need of more Maintenance	31276	48.12	X
8	Lack of market Information	32131	49.43	VII
9	Lack of knowledge of the sales person	27323	42.04	XIII
10	Delay (or) not getting of Govt. Subsidy	25626	39.42	XIV
11	Non-availability of minimum quantity	31663	48.71	VIII
12	Time consuming	34524	53.11	V
13	Expensive	28814	44.33	XII
14	Have no information about it	29748	45.77	XI

An attempt has been made to know the problems faced by the consumers while using the green products. To identify the most important problem, Henry Garrett Ranking Technique was employed and it has been classified into fourteen categories viz., high price, non-availability of product varieties, non-availability of resources for using green products, poor after sale service, poor customer relationship, duplicate products, need of more maintenance, lack of market information, lack of knowledge of the sales person, delay (or) not getting of govt. subsidy, non-availability of minimum quantity, time consuming, expensive and have no information about it.

It is observed that major problem faced by the consumers while using green products as 'high price' which is ranked first with the Garrett score of 38861 points. It is followed by the second and third ranks viz to 'non-availability of resources for using green products' and 'duplicate products' with the Garrett scores of 38696 and 36596 points respectively.

Suggestions

- It is found that whenever the amount spent for purchase of green products and period of using green products increase their attitude towards green satisfaction decreases. Hence, it is suggested that strategies and policies in relation to green products be developed and implemented so as to guide and help the retailers and customers towards a green change and also to get satisfaction.
- It is observed that major problem faced by the consumers while using green products as 'high price'. Therefore, it is suggested that the green products manufacturers should fix the reasonable price for increasing sales.

Conclusion

Green marketing is a continuous process that requires constant inputs from the suppliers, government legislations and policies and the people. This is required so that the green marketing strategy can be aligned to the target markets and so it can gain a sustainable competitive advantage. Businesses should concentrate on focusing on developing a green product that have a demand from the general public and which also aligns to the company's core positioning. Furthermore businesses should also present efforts in a manner that reduces the risk related to costs. To conclude, creating and implementing a green marketing strategy is not straight forward because it is not only complex, but also a relative concept that continuously varies over time.

The present study is conducted to understand the consumers' attitude and to identify the problems towards green products. It is found that whenever the amount spent for purchase of green products and period of using green products increase their attitude towards green satisfaction decreases. Further, it is found that the major problem faced by the consumers while using green products as 'high price'. Hence, it is concluded that the success of green products depend on the consumers adopting or changing their attitude and behavior towards such products. It is imperative that green marketers identify all the factors that encourage cooperation.

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