



FACTORS DETERMINING THE PURCHASE OF ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT OF TAMILNADU, INDIA

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ABSTRACT For the last few decades, concerns over the different environmental issues are gaining attention of various groups of the society. Consumers are becoming more aware about the environmental problems and have started realizing that majority of issues are because of increasing population, our consumption habits and are the consequences of technological advancements. These awakened consumers are now ready to change their preferences from mainstream products to greener products which have least impact on the environment. Changing consumption habits and rising preferences of consumers for green products are proving to have greater influence on the corporate world also. In response to this, big corporate houses have now started addressing environmental issues in various manners. In this research the factors determining the purchase of eco friendly goods are being witnessed in the Coimbatore district of Tamilnadu.

KEYWORDS : Environmental issues, technological advancement, consumption habits and eco friendly goods

Introduction and Problem discussion

In today's business scenario, terms such as 'recyclable', 'biodegradable', 'environmentally friendly', 'sustainable' and 'bio-based' are the latest buzzwords. As society becomes more concerned with the natural environment, businesses have begun to modify their behavior in an attempt to address society's ecological concerns. It is amply clear that regulatory actions by pollution control agencies alone cannot restore the environment to its pristine state. Pro-active and promotional roles should also be geared up in harmony with the overall environmental protection strategy. Consumers are also responsible for environmental destruction due to unethical practices in their day-to-day activities that harm the environment. Consumers pollute the environment by increasing their usage of non-biodegradable goods and dumping them as waste in large volumes, their irresponsible behavior in the usage of non-renewable energy thereby causing strain on natural resources, improper waste disposal methods, absence of recycling activities etc. Hence consumers also have a very big role to play in environmental conservation. The time has come for consumers to take the lead in prompting manufacturers to adopt clean and eco-friendly technologies and environmentally-safe disposal of used products, along with preventive approaches.

With increasing environmental consciousness, companies need to understand not only green consumers' behaviour but also the factors that influence green purchases and those factors that act as barriers to green purchases. This will not only help the marketers in segmenting the market appropriately and developing strategies to meet green consumers' needs but also the policy makers in enforcing sustainability in marketing of goods and services. With the above settings the present study is intended to find the answers for the following research questions;

1. How far the various determinants influence the purchase of eco-friendly products?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is

1. To identify the determinants of the purchase of eco-friendly products.

METHODOLOGY

The research is investigative and qualitative in nature and the methodology adopted for the study is presented below:

Sample design

The population targeted for this study consisted of samples from the district of Coimbatore who have purchased at least two product categories out of the five selected for the study. A family was selected as a sampling unit. Any adult member of the family who makes the most purchase decisions for the family was the respondent for this study. The sampling technique adopted for the study was convenience sampling where the sample respondents were selected on the basis of the accessibility. A sample size of 550 respondents was chosen to whom the questionnaires were distributed. Out of 550, 500 questionnaires were returned by the respondents which represented a very satisfactory response rate of 91 per cent. And hence the sample

size of 500 respondents has been taken for the study.

Collection of data

The research work is mainly based on primary data collected from the sample respondents through a structured questionnaire. Other information relevant for the study's analysis and others was collected from secondary sources such as journals, magazines, published and unpublished research works and websites.

Tools applied

The statistical tools namely the factor analysis, arithmetic mean, standard deviation and co-efficient of variation is being applied for the study.

Limitations

1. This research was location specific and was confined to the district of Coimbatore in the state of Tamil Nadu in India. Hence the results of this research may not be applicable to other parts of globe.
2. The study has all the limitations of a qualitative research namely subjectivity and personal bias.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Determining the Purchase of Eco-Friendly Products

Table 1: Factor Analysis for Determinants of Eco-Friendly Purchase – Rotated Component Matrix

Variables	Factor scores for component					Cronbach Alpha Value
	1	2	3	4	5	
I would buy eco-friendly products for the general cause of eco-preservation.	-.008	.838	-.027	-.064	-.049	0.867
My individual role as a consumer matters a lot for the community welfare.	-.020	.829	-.053	-.067	.027	
I have changed my choice of many products for ecological reasons.	-.049	.756	-.002	.003	-.040	
I am a strong supporter of environmental regulations.	-.094	.744	.141	.010	.025	
I convince my family and friends not to buy some products that are harmful to environment.	-.081	.799	.053	-.080	.120	
When I buy products, I will try to consider how my use of them will affect the environment and other consumers.	-.046	.701	.140	-.024	.022	

I buy energy efficient household appliances to cut down my electricity bills.	-.060	.059	.024	.145	.661	0.748
I drive as little as possible to save my fuel cost.	.107	.042	.104	-.114	.790	
I would buy eco-friendly products only if they are beneficial in terms of cost and quality to my family.	.060	-.190	-.010	.111	.647	
I switch off lights when not in use mainly to reduce my energy bills.	-.137	-.079	.092	.499	.632	
I buy organic food for the health and safety of my family.	-.124	.152	.215	-.036	.578	
I feel very happy and satisfied if my family and friends appreciate my purchase of eco-friendly products	.064	.045	.788	.204	-.006	0.733
I would buy eco-friendly goods mainly to impress other people.	.118	.044	.729	.049	-.079	
I enjoy the recognition I would get in the society for the display of my eco-friendly behaviour.	.237	.101	.629	.139	.015	
I would buy eco-friendly products only when it was strongly recommended by others.	.352	-.031	.522	.562	-.061	
I would buy eco-friendly products only when someone in my family insists on buying them.	.659	-.101	.130	.289	-.149	0.700
I would buy eco-friendly products only when there was no other choice.	.626	.001	-.001	.400	-.010	
I cannot change my behaviour voluntarily for anything unless there was some compulsion.	.677	-.119	.013	.094	-.131	
I would continue to buy products that are convenient to me until they are available in the market.	.422	-.056	.056	.195	.143	
I would buy eco-friendly goods just to try them.	.282	-.062	-.102	.688	-.065	0.765
I would go for eco-friendly goods just for a change.	.376	.097	.046	.491	.063	

for each of the factors. The table has indicated that the first six variables belonged to the factor selflessness, the next five factors converged as selfishness, the next four variables converged as appreciation, the next four variables converged as obligation and the last two variables fell under the category other reasons.

Cronbach Alpha test was performed in order to test the internal consistency of the variables under each factor. If the value of alpha is closer to 1, higher the consistency and the reliability. The alpha value of selflessness was 0.867, selfishness being 0.748, appreciation being 0.733, obligation being 0.700 and other reasons being 0.765 which was quite high in explaining the internal consistency and reliability of the variables in each of the two factors.

The average of the scores of the individual variables of the five factors extracted was considered for further analysis. The analysis of determinants of eco-friendly purchase was undertaken in the study with the help of the statistical tools namely mean scores and analysis of variance.

Determinants of Eco-Friendly Purchase: Mean Score Analysis
In order to assess the degree to which the determinants influence eco-friendly purchase of the respondents, their mean scores were calculated and presented in Table 4

Table 4: Determinants of Eco-Friendly Purchase - Overall Mean Scores

Determinants of Eco-friendly Purchase	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Selflessness	3.48	.866	24.57
Selfishness	4.15	.518	13.06
Appreciation	3.02	.688	21.61
Obligation	2.59	.839	27.52
Other reasons	2.80	.751	26.84

Source: Compiled and calculated using the primary data

From the above table it was clear that, in general, among the five factors which are likely to influence eco-friendly purchase, selfishness has the highest mean score of 4.15 and it was the most influencing factor. This was followed by Selflessness which has a mean score of 3.48. The next factor was the appreciation (mean score 3.02) the respondents get, that influence them to buy the green commodities. The least influencing factors are obligation with a mean score of 2.59 and finally other reasons with a mean score of 2.80.

The coefficient of variation indicated that there was a high degree of convergence of responses in the factor selfishness, followed by appreciation, selflessness and other reasons. The lowest degree of agreeability of responses was with the factor obligation.

CONCLUSION

Sustainability is the joint responsibility of government, producers and consumers. Consumers may adopt sustainability practices in their day-to-day life by showing their preference towards eco-friendly products. Promoters of eco-friendly goods have to generate new ideas and avenues in cost cutting and price reduction as high price was observed to be the most important barrier restraining most of the consumers from going for such products. However, the complex and erratic behaviour of consumers pose challenges to the government and producers in addressing their issues and fulfilling their needs. In this context, this research was undertaken to understand the consumer awareness, attitude and purchase behaviour towards eco-friendly goods in the district of Coimbatore.

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