

A Study on the Perception of Young Customers towards Green Products with Special Reference to Ernakulam District

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ABSTRACT

Environmental issues have become a serious concern for consumers, companies and all across the world. It has led to the manufacturing of green products that will create only lesser impact on environment. Companies put sincere efforts towards green marketing initiatives and innovation on the products to make it eco-friendly. Environmental protection and sustainable development are the main focus of these green movements. But the fact is that the success rate of these green initiatives depends upon how the customers perceive them. Hence, it is important to identify the perception of customers towards green products. This present study aims to understand the perception of young customers towards green products and the factors influencing their perception. The data required for the study were collected through a well-structured questionnaire with a sample of 101 young customers of Ernakulam District.

Keywords: Environmental issues, Green marketing, Green products, Sustainable development

I. INTRODUCTION

During the modern era, environmental degradation and its impact on human life have emerged as one of the burning issues which draw the attention of various classes of people all across the world. The major causes for environmental deterioration are industrialization, rise in population, rapid growth of the economy and the changing consumption patterns of consumers worldwide. And the consequences of environmental degradation are global warming, depletion of stratospheric ozone layer, pollution of sea and rivers, acid rain and desertification. This has put the society under pressure and thereby environmental preservation becomes a pressing need of the whole economy. As a result, most of the industries and business concerns were diverted to the path of green marketing with the underlying mission to preserve the environment. All most all the governments are also concerned about the emerging environmental issues and attempt to motivate consumers for greater participation in building awareness and increase green product use. Eco-friendly products are those products that will not pollute the earth or deplete natural resources, product which can be recycled or conserved. These products have no or least impact on environment. This very nature of harmless effect is the most inducing factor that drives every business organization towards the production and propagation of green products and green marketing.

Now-a-days by realizing the need for preserving the environment, companies consider the production of green products as their strategic mission towards sustainable development. This necessitates the concerns to give equal focus on eco-friendly products along with the prevailing products. In such a scenario, it is really worth to study the perception of the consumers towards these eco-friendly products which are gaining popularity as a part of addressing the environmental issues. Along with this, the level of awareness among the consumers regarding these green products needs to be identified. This study tries to address the perception of customers towards green products. It tries to seek the perception of young customers who are the most decisive class of population in a developing country like India.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Most of the studies, (Sanjeev, Radha ,& Anita, 2012) (Iravani, Zadeh, Mahroeian, &Forozia, 2012) (Kaur & Jain, 2004) aimed at understanding consumer awareness regarding green products, where some others identified the factors influencing their perception towards green products (Mahapatra, 2013) (Ellen, Wiener , & Cobb-Walgren, 1991) (R.Dharmalingam, 2019). Intention of today's consumers to purchase green products, matters like Ecolabel and Branding were also examined by some other eminent scholars across the world (Sahar Hosseinikhah, 2017) (Norazah, 2013).

Almost all studies, specifically (Lavanya & Dr, 2019) revealed a positive perception of consumers towards the environment and green products. Other relevant findings of the studies reviewed that the consumer not only have environment concern but also have high intentions to buy green products, and showed that the awareness of consumers on green marketing has a significant impact on consumer's buying behavior (Prof & Dr, 2019) (Chikosha&Potwana, 2021), while another study (Wilson, Amran, Rini, &Jaratin, 2014) unveiled eco-label and green product value made the largest contribution in purchase intention among consumers, consumer attitudes on the government's role and their personal norm towards the environment contributed to their attitudes on green product, that consumers are ready to pay more prices for the products which are causing less environmental pollution and also showed there were no significant differences between gender in their attitudes.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the perception of young customers towards green products.
2. To identify the factors that influences the perception of young customers towards green products.

IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Now-a-days environmental issues are increasing at an alarming rate. The serious effects of global warming, environment pollution etc., pressurizes the society to adopt an environment friendly lifestyle. The over consumption and the exploitation of natural resources make the environment worse. It is in this situation green tagged products are getting more prominence. As a mission to overcome the environmental issues it became the need of the people to switch over to green products from the modern non-green products. The present study demanding the answers for:

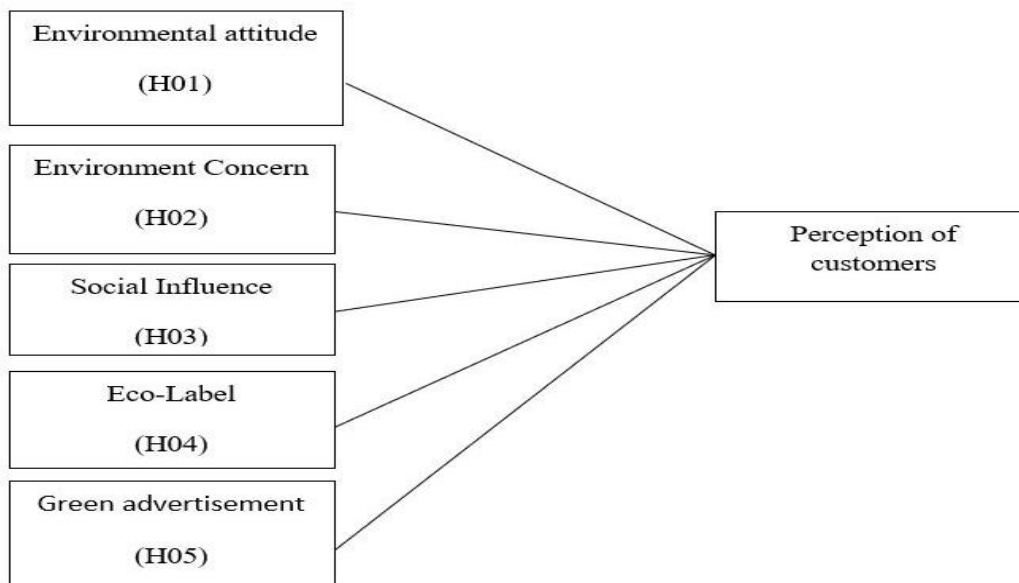
1. What is the perception of young customers towards green products?

2. What are the factors that influence the perception of young customers towards green products?

V. HYPOTHESES

- H₀₁ – There is no significant relationship between environmental attitude and perception of customers.
 H₀₂ – There is no significant relationship between environmental concern and perception of customers.
 H₀₃ – There is no significant relationship between social influence and perception of customers.
 H₀₄ – There is no significant relationship between eco-label and perception of customers.
 H₀₅ – There is no significant relationship between green advertisement and perception of customers.

VI. HYPOTHESISED MODEL



Source: Compiled by the researcher based on extensive literature review.

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature. The population, sample, data collection and tools for analysis are described below:

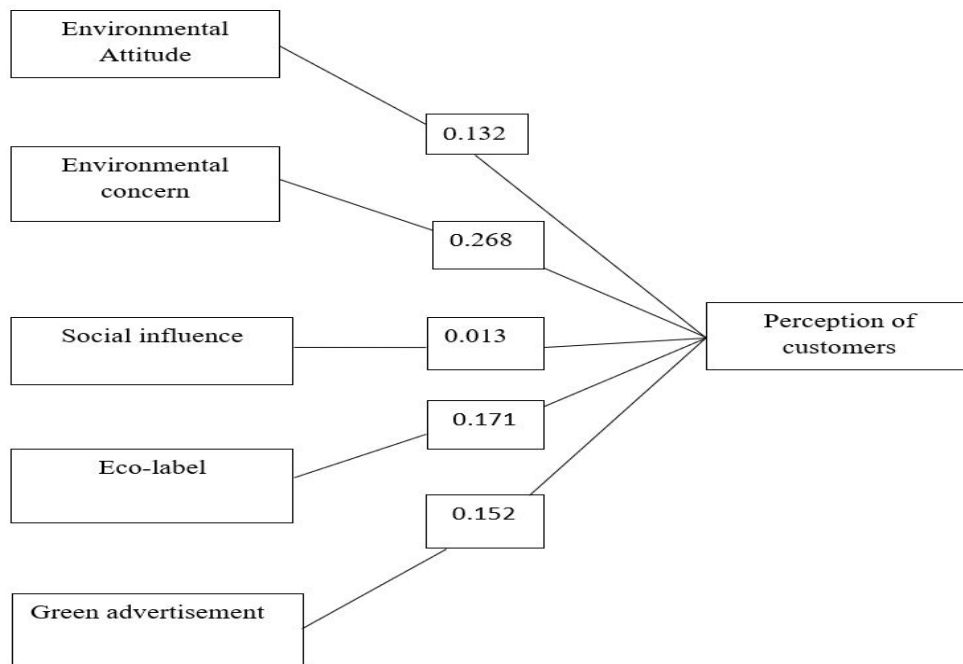
1. **Population:** The population for this study is the young class of customers in Ernakulam District.
2. **Sample:** The sample for this study constitutes 101 young customers of Ernakulam District. For this study convenient sampling method is used for selecting the sample.
3. **Method of data collection:** Data for this study is collected through a structured questionnaire which is sent to the respondents via Google form.
4. **Sources of data:** The study demands both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected by means of structured questionnaire which is developed by digital means. The questionnaire was sent to the respondents through Google forms. The secondary data sources include published journals, articles, books and websites. The responses on the abstract variables were collected on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to 'strongly disagree' (1).

5. **Tools of analysis:** The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS 21. The various tools used for analysis and inferences include mean, mode and standard deviation. Correlation and regression analysis were used to test the hypothesis.

VIII. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Young Customers: This study focuses on the young customers of Ernakulam district. The young customers under this study fall under the age category of 18-38.

VALIDATED MODEL



Source: Compiled by the Researcher based on Hypothesis tested.

Empirically validated model is portrayed in Figure 1.1. Environmental Concern ($\beta=0.268$) has the highest beta co-efficient followed by Eco-label ($\beta=0.171$), Green advertisement ($\beta=0.152$), Environmental attitude ($\beta=0.132$) and Social influence ($\beta=0.013$). The beta co-efficient of Environmental attitude, Environmental concern, Social influence, Eco-label, Green advertisement are statistically significant at 5 percent significance level ($p<0.05$). Based on the above model it is understood that the 5 null hypotheses are rejected and their strong relation between variables. Based on the standardized beta co-efficient given in the above table following interpretations can be made.

H01: Environmental attitude – Perception of customers: Since the P value is 0.03 the beta co-efficient of the variable is significant and the co-efficient (0.132) being positive proves that there exists positive relation between Environmental attitude and Perception of customers. In short, Environmental attitude has positive relationship of 13.2 percent over Perception of customers.

H02: Environmental concern – Perception of customers: Since the P value is 0.035 the beta co-efficient of the variable is significant and the co-efficient (0.268) being positive proves that there exist positive relation between Environmental concern and Perception of customers. In short, Environmental concern has positive relationship of 26.8 percent over Perception of customers.

H03: Social influence – Perception of customers: Since the P value is 0.04 the beta co-efficient of the variable is significant and the co-efficient (0.013) being positive proves that there exist positive relation between Social influence and Perception of customers. In short, Social influence has positive relationship of 1.3 percent over Perception of customers.

H04: Eco-label – Perception of customers: Since the P value is 0.026 the beta co-efficient of the variable is significant and the co-efficient (0.171) being positive proves that there exist positive relation between Eco-label and Perception of customers. In short, Eco-label has positive relationship of 17.1 percent over Perception of customers.

H05: Green advertisement – Perception of customers: Since the P value is 0.017 the beta co-efficient of the variable is significant and the co-efficient (0.152) being positive proves that there exists positive relation between Green advertisement and Perception of customers. In short, Green advertisement has positive relationship of 15.2 percent over Perception of customers.

IX. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Demographic Findings:

1. Majority of the respondents belongs to 23-28 age category and most of them were females.
2. Majority of the respondents were students followed by employees and not working category.
3. Majority of the respondents were graduates followed by post graduates and very few respondents were below graduates.

Descriptive Findings:

1. Environmental attitude (EA)

1. Majority of the respondents agree that more environmental protection works are needed.
2. All the mean score are above 3 which mean that respondents agree that environmental attitude affects their perception towards green products.

2. Environmental concern (EC)

1. Majority of the respondents agree that they are environmentally responsible.
2. All the mean scores are above 3 which mean that respondents agree that environmental concern affect their perception towards green products.

3. Social influence (SI)

1. Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the purchase of eco-friendly products will make them a positive impression on other people.
2. They agree that consumption of eco-friendly products will help them feel socially acceptable.
3. All the mean scores are above 3 which show their high perception regarding the variable social influence.

4. Eco-label (EL)

1. Majority of the respondents agree that they consider what is printed on eco-labels to be accurate.
2. Most of them believe that eco-label products are better for environment.
3. All the mean scores are above 3 which show their higher perception regarding the variable eco-label.

5. Green advertisement (GA)

1. Majority of the respondents agree that the contents of green advertisements are of relevance to their daily life.

2. Most of them agree that green advertisements are always trustworthy.
 3. All the mean scores are above 2 which show their higher perception towards the variable green advertisement.
- 6. Perception of customers (PC)**
1. Majority of the respondents think that green products will help them to protect the environment.
 2. Most of them feel that it is important to them that the products they use do not harm the environment.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to measure the influence of EA, EC, SI, EL and GA on PC. The independent variables are EA, EC, SI, EL, GA and the dependent variable is PC. The following are the results:

1. The correlation co-efficient between independent variable Environmental attitude, Environmental concern, Social influence, Eco-label, Green advertisement and dependent variable Perception of customers show a positive correlation.
2. The R square and adjusted R square were almost the same. The adjusted R square shows that 40.337 percent variation in PC is explained by EA, EC, SI, EL and GA.
3. The model is statistically significant at 5 percent level with F value 10.276.
4. The beta co-efficients of Environmental attitude, Environmental concern, Social influence, Eco-label, Green advertisement are statistically significant at 5 percent significance level ($p < 0.05$).
5. There exists a positive effect of Environmental concern on Perception of customers with its beta co-efficient 26.8 percent.

X. SUGGESTIONS

1. Government should take initiatives like green awareness campaigns in order to make society aware about the need for using green products and to help them understand how it contributes towards sustainable development.
2. Marketers should boost up the green advertisements for promoting the usage of green products. Companies should focus on creating ads with green and eco-friendly image that will influence the green purchasing decisions of customers. It will also help to attract those customers who are concerned about the environment.
3. More information regarding the features of green products should be displayed in eco-labels so that customers can get to know more about the benefits out of using it.
4. The awareness campaigns and promotions should highlight the recyclable and biodegradable features of green products and how it will help us to protect the environment.

XI. CONCLUSION

The green products are gaining popularity in the present scenario in which environment protection becomes a collective responsibility of every citizen. The green marketing efforts of various companies make it easily available among the customers. But, it is equally important that the customers should be willing to switch from

non-green products to green products. It depends upon how the perception of customers are towards green products.

The study found that Perception of customers is dependent on Environmental attitude, Environmental concern, social influence, Eco-label and green advertisement. Also, the sustainable consumption behaviour of consumers comes from opinions of peer group as well as social recognition. Hence, companies and marketers could promote the usage of green products by focusing on the above factors. Through the promotional activities, the customers can be easily influenced and can enhance their positive outlook towards green products. It will ultimately enhance the acceptance of green products among customers through which sustainable development becomes a reality. There by keeps the earth from turning into an enormous dump yard before long. To put it plainly, utilizing eco-accommodating items will protect the planet and every one of its occupants from evil impacts of human exercises.

XII. REFERENCES

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