

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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A STUDY ON THE BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF GREEN PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to examine the buying behavior of green product among various income level groups. This study seeks to understand consumers' green purchasing intentions and compares the factors influencing the purchase decision of green products and non green products. For this purpose a sample survey was conducted on 90 respondents based in Calicut city. The respondents were divided into 3 categories, i.e., high income level group, middle income level group and low income level group. The primary data was collected with the help of an interview schedule. Results indicate that there is no significant difference between buying behaviors and income level and no significant difference between purchase decision and sector (government & private) employees. To the end, health was considered as the most important factor influencing green products and cost is the most important factor influencing the purchase of non green products.

KEYWORDS

Green Products, Green Consumers.

INTRODUCTION

Going green - is a phrase that's becoming more and more common as people start to realize the enormity of the environmental challenges we all face. Everybody knows that the earth is in trouble: every day we see new stories about global warming, acid rain, oil spills, deforestation, or nuclear waste. Being green isn't just about helping the environment - it's also about keeping oneself healthy and happy. Green products are becoming popular as consumers become more aware of the hazards of chemicals and toxins in their food, their households and their outdoor environment. The bodies of human beings put up with a lot every day, from fast food burgers to air pollution to a poor night's sleep, and going green means ensuring that toxins don't affect our environment. This can mean doing something as simple as using a better air filter or switching to eco-friendly cleaning products, but it can also mean making more profound changes in your life. The most important thing is to educate our self not only about the impact on the environment but also about how our environment is affecting us.

Basically, going green means to live life, as an individual as well as a community, in a way that is friendly to the natural environment and is sustainable for the earth. It means contributing towards maintaining the natural ecological balance in the environment, and preserving the planet and its natural systems and resources. It also means taking steps, whether big or small, to minimize the harm you do to the environment (including the carbon footprints you leave behind), as a result of inhabiting this planet. In practice, going green means adopting five basic principles in the daily life:

- Reduce pollution
- Conserve resources
- Conserve energy
- Reduce waste
- Protect earth's ecological resources

One type of environmentally conscious behaviour is environmental consumerism (green buying)--purchasing and consuming products that are benign towards the environment. The rising number of consumers who prefer and are willing to buy eco-friendly products are creating opportunity for businesses that are using "green products" or "environmentally friendly" as a component of their value proposition.

GREEN PRODUCTS – THE CONCEPT

Green products are those that have less of an impact on the environment or are less detrimental to human health than traditional equivalents. Green products might, typically, be formed or part-formed from recycled components, be manufactured in a more energy-conservative way, or be supplied to the market with less packaging (or all three).

Green products generally use eco-friendly materials and energy-efficient means of production, thereby causing less or no detrimental impact on the environment. Eco-friendly products do not contain harmful elements that might pollute the ecosystem and the production process of which does not result to any toxic by-products or negative externalities. Moreover, green products are usually biodegradable and made from recyclable materials. They also conserve energy by promoting renewable or natural energy sources and low-maintenance energy requirements.

Many innovative businesses have successfully introduced "green" products in recent years. While many of these products have saved money, they have also reduced impacts on human health and the environment by using recycled or recyclable material (e.g., recycled paper products), reducing their energy usage (e.g., efficient washing machines that use less water and energy) or eliminating the use of toxic chemicals during their manufacture.

Examples of Greener Products

• Product Category Environmental	• Traditional Product	• Greener Product	• Improved Performance
• Lighting	• Incandescent bulb	• Fluorescent bulb	• Less energy used
• Paper tablet	• 100% virgin paper	• 50% post consumer paper	• Reduces natural resource use

For instance, in the above lighting example, while fluorescent bulbs use less energy than incandescent bulbs, these bulbs contain mercury that can be released into the environment if they are not properly disposed (e.g., not recycled).)BBB

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As the human population continues to grow and technological advancements (e.g. mass production, transportation) help make more material goods more readily available to people all over the world, we consume more and more natural resources. This rate of consumption is especially apparent in developed countries.

More and more trees are cut down to produce more and more paper for the growing number of offices worldwide. More oil, coal and other natural fuels are extracted from the earth to drive our factory machineries, our automobiles (including our airplanes) and our homes. However, the world's supplies of oil and coal will not last forever, and our use of these fuels is contributing to polluted air, acid rain and global warming. We need to learn to consume only what we need, and be considerate in our consumption. In other words, remember that we are not the only ones that the earth has to provide for. But if we really need to make purchases, consider buying green products instead. The use of such environmentally friendly products helps you reduce your carbon footprints, and even allow you to contribute to a greener planet.

A product is considered earth-friendly if it is biodegradable, meaning that it will pose no threat to the earth and environment, when it is released to the air, water or earth while in use or when disposed of. These types of products usually decompose much quicker in a landfill, than similar items that are not biodegradable. Biodegradable household cleaners, soaps, dish and dishwasher detergents and laundry soaps are just a few examples of this type of green product.

At long last, the impulse to go green is spreading faster than a morning glory. Organizations of all types are launching green campaigns. Consumers too are getting behind the idea of being greener. Consumers are concerned about the environmental and social impacts of the products they buy. Consumers want to act green, but they expect businesses to lead the way. According to our global survey, 61 percent of consumers say that corporations should take the lead in tackling the issue of climate change. To do this, businesses need to develop more and better Earth-friendly products. Some already are, but they are not doing a good job of marketing them. To realize the true potential of the green market, businesses must help consumers change their behaviours.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mangali Morel & Francis Kwakye (2012) in their article "Green Marketing: Consumers Attitude Towards Eco Friendly and Purchase Intention in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods(FMCG) Sector" aims to explore the influencing of the four traditional marketing mix elements, satisfaction and word of mouth(WOM) and purchasing intentions of consumers on eco-friendly products especially FMCG. Furthermore one prospective study was to look into the comparison of the Swedish and Non Swedish, their attitude towards green products. A quantitative research was adopted. It was founded that satisfaction goes with purchase intention. Positive attitudes concerning willingness to pay an extra price for green products are also correlated with purchase intention. The findings also demonstrated that there were differences in attitudes and purchase intention towards green products between men and women and between Swedish and Non Swedish.

Aysel Boztepe (2012) in his article "Green Marketing and Its impact on Consumer Buying Behaviour" aims to give information about the effect of green marketing on customers purchasing behaviors. According to the results of the analysis, environmental awareness, green product features, green promotion activities and green price affect green purchasing behaviors of the consumers in positive way.

Marius Christopher Carl Claudy, (2011) in his thesis "An Empirical Investigation of Consumer Resistance to Green Product Innovation", aims to advance theoretically and empirically our understanding of consumer resistance, to identify consumers' motives for resisting green innovation and to highlight strategic implications for marketers and policy makers.

Usama Awan & Muhammed Amer Raza (2011) in their article "Green Consumer Behaviour-Empirical Study of Swedish Consumer Behaviour" aims to provide better opportunity to examine how environmental issues are important in Consumer decision making process and what are the important factors affecting the consumers while taking decision towards electricity providing company. The data was collected through self administered questionnaire and quantitative research methods. The research proves that when consumer makes decision he does not consider only the product but also keep other factors in mind like price, lack of information, etc.,

Durif, Boivin and Julien (2010) in their article "In search of a green product definition" compares the definition of green product within three different perspectives (academic, industrial, consumers) based on a descriptive meta-analysis, a bibliographic approach, and a consumer survey.

Jeff.Y.Chen, (1994) in his thesis The Economic Impact in Green Product Development, intends to develop a model that measures the cost and the benefit of products. There are three objectives that this thesis tries to achieve. First objective to develop an inexpensive model that performs relatively quick environmental assessment. The second objective is to make the model flexible to the product that is, even if the product changes attributes. Third, the model one should be able to be utilized in assessing various products.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Nowadays consumers are very much aware of green products and thus its scope is wider. People no matters, which ever income sector they are in, are ready to buy green product. Majority of the consumers have perceived green products as healthy and environmental friendly products. Companies should make every possible effort to undertake research and development in order to come up with green products in the interest of the consumers well being. The area selected to study the consumer's buying behavior of green product is Calicut City

RESEARCH PROBLEM

On a global level, there is an increased awareness of global warming and adverse climate conditions and as a result there is a spur in interest toward environmental protection and sustainable development.

The growing social concern for the environment has recently emerged as a key issue in marketing. In recent years, this fact has led to the consumers' increased interest in making environmentally social purchases. More and more consumers have realized that their consumption activities will lead to environmental problems and have translated their environmental concern into action.

Accordingly, public opinion polls show overwhelming support for environmental concern and environmentally sound purchases. The "new millennium era" has witnessed that consumers are more aware and responsible to purchase green products- i.e. products which are environmentally-friendly - to tackle the ecological and environmental issues. The outcome of this is that, some of the consumers translated their environmental concern into actively purchasing green products commitment.

One type of environmentally conscious behaviour is environmental consumerism (green buying)--purchasing and consuming products that are benign towards the environment. The rising number of consumers who prefer and are willing to buy eco-friendly products are creating opportunity for businesses that are using "eco-friendly" or "environmentally friendly" as a component of their value proposition.

As green consumers are becoming more and more aware of green products, the researcher is making an attempt to study the buying behaviour of these products among different income level groups.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the buying behaviour pattern of green products among low, middle and high income groups.
2. To study and compare the purchase decision of green products between Government and Private sector employees.

HYPOTHESES

On the basis of the above objectives, the following hypotheses have been formulated

1. H_0 - There is no significant difference in the buying behaviour of green products on the basis of the income and employment sector.
 H_1 - There is significant difference in the buying behaviour of green products on the basis of the income and employment sector..
2. H_0 - There is no significant difference between the factors influencing the purchasing decision of green products and non green products.
 H_1 - There is significant difference between the factors influencing the purchasing decision of green products and non green products

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

GREEN PRODUCTS

Green products are those that have less impact on the environment or are less detrimental to human health than traditional equivalents. Green products might, typically, be formed or part-formed from recycled components, be manufactured in a more energy-conservative way, or be supplied to the market with less packaging (or all three). In this study, very high priced green products are not taken into consideration like solar panels.

GREEN CONSUMERS

Green Consumers are those who care about the environmental attributes, and are willing to pay a premium for products manufactured in environmental friendly production processes.

METHODOLOGY USED FOR THE STUDY

The researchers, in order to make the study, a sample size of 90 respondents are selected. A stratified random sampling method was adopted. The three strata to the sample selected are high income level people, middle income level people and low income level people. Another stratification is also made on the basis of the employment sector, 45 respondents from government sector, and 45 from private sector.

SAMPLE FRAME

NO OF RESPONDENTS

• Sector	• High income level group	• Medium income level group	• Low income level group	• Total
• Government	• 15	• 15	• 15	• 45
• Private	• 15	• 15	• 15	• 45
• Total	• 30	• 30	• 30	• 90

SOURCES OF DATA

The data was collected through primary and secondary sources. For the collection of primary data, the researchers employed Interview schedule method. The interview schedules were supplied to 90 respondents to collect data. Area of study was Calicut city. Secondary data were collected from various sources like websites, marketing journals, textbooks of marketing management, articles, etc.,

TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

The following tools and techniques were used in the study

- Percentage analysis
- Fischer’s Exact Test
- Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study puts light on valuable information that is derived out of the careful analysis and interpretation of data collected through sample survey.

AWARENESS ABOUT GREEN PRODUCTS

The sample respondents were grouped under three categories, based on their income. Each category was been asked about the awareness level regarding the green products. The results of the same are tabulated in the following table.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF AWARENESS OF GREEN PRODUCTS AMONG VARIOUS INCOME GROUPS

Income	Aware		Total
	Yes	No	
low	26	4	30
middle	29	1	30
high	30	0	30
Total	85	5	90

Source: Sample Survey

Fisher's Exact Test	
Table Probability (P)	0.0187
Pr <= P	0.122

It was found that in the case of people having an annual income of below 3lakh,4.44% are not aware of green products between 3lakh -5 lakh 1.11% are not aware of green products while in the case of people a having an annual income of more than 5 lakhs, it was found that all are aware of green product. As the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the income and awareness level of the green products is accepted.

AWARENESS LEVEL OF THE EMPLOYEES ON THE BASIS OF EMPLOYMENT SECTOR

In order to examine whether there is any difference among the government and private sector employees about the awareness level of green products the results of the primary data collected are shown in Table 2

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION SHOWING AWARENESS OF GREEN PRODUCTS AMONG GOVERNMENT & PRIVATE EMPLOYEES

Sector	Aware		Total
	Yes	No	
Govt	41	4	45
Private	44	1	45
Total	85	5	90

Source: Sample Survey

Fisher's Exact Test	
Table Probability (P)	0.1526
Pr <= P	0.3607

As the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the job sector and awareness level of the green product is accepted. In the case of people working in government and private sector, majority of the people are aware of green products

SOURCES OF AWARENESS OF GREEN PRODUCTS

The sources through which consumers are aware of green products are gathered. The consumers depended on sources like newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, through friends, relatives etc., The results of the following are tabulated and shown below:

TABLE : 3 DISTRIBUTION OF SOURCES OF AWARENESS ABOUT GREEN PRODUCTS

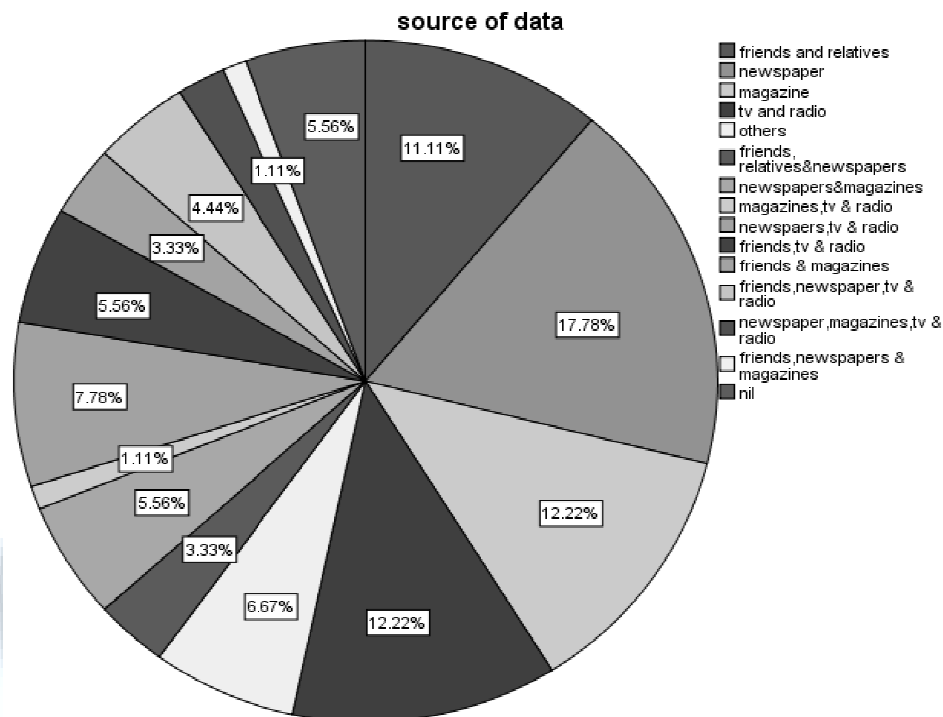
Sources of Data	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid friends and relatives	10	11.1	11.1
newspaper	16	17.8	28.9
magazine	11	12.2	41.1
tv and radio	11	12.2	53.3
others	6	6.7	60.0
friends,relatives&newspapers	3	3.3	63.3
newspapers&magazines	5	5.6	68.9
magazines,tv & radio	1	1.1	70.0
newspapers,tv & radio	7	7.8	77.8
friends,tv & radio	5	5.6	83.3
friends & magazines	3	3.3	86.7
friends,newspaper,tv & radio	4	4.4	91.1
newspaper,magazines,tv & radio	2	2.2	93.3
friends,newspapers & magazines	1	1.1	94.4
nil	5	5.6	100.0
Total	90	100.0	

Source: Sample Survey

Regarding sources of data, it was found that majority of the people are aware of green products through newspapers which is followed by magazine, television and radio.

The graphical representation of the table is presented in Figure 1:

FIGURE 1



USAGE OF GREEN PRODUCTS

To know how many of the respondents are using and among the users what about the number of times of using green products. The results of the data collected are presented in Table No 4 & 5 respectively

TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION SHOWING USAGE OF GREEN PRODUCTS

Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Valid yes	82	91.1
no	7	7.8
Not aware	1	1.1
Total	90	100.0

Source: Sample Survey

From the survey it was found that 91.11% of the people are the users of green product

TABLE 5: DISTRIBUTION SHOWING USAGE OF NUMBER OF GREEN PRODUCTS

Particulars		Frequency	Percent
Valid	none	9	10.0
	one	7	7.8
	more than1	53	58.9
	more than 3	19	21.1
	nil	2	2.2
	Total	90	100.0

Source: Sample Survey

It was found that 58.89% of the people buy and use more than one green products, while 21.11% of the people buy and use more than three green products, 7.78% of the people say that they buy and use only one green product and 10% of the people say that they don't buy green products. The pictorial representation of no of green products used by the consumers are shown in Figure 2

FIGURE 2

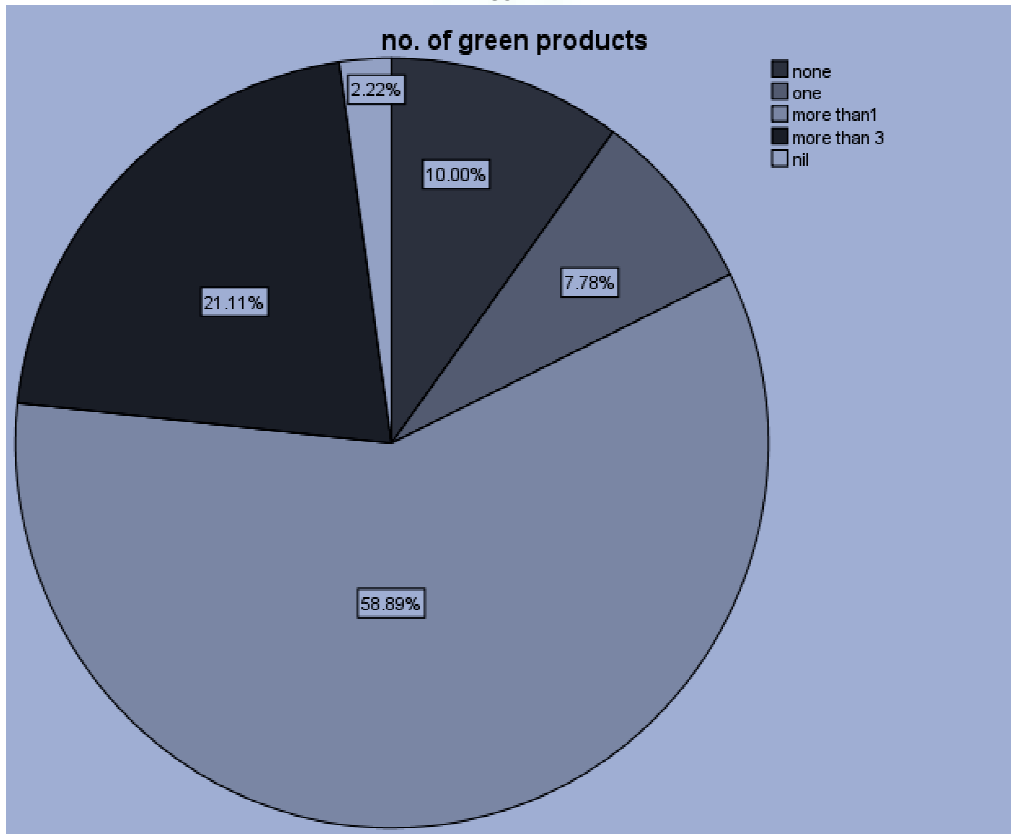


TABLE 6: TABLE SHOWING SIGNIFICANCE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GREEN PRODUCTS AND NON GREEN PRODUCTS

Factors	Mean of green products	Mean of Non green products	P value =0.05
Cost	6.39	8.03	.000*
Durability	6.56	7.18	.042*
Comfort	6.80	6.62	.248
Healthy	8.81	5.38	.000*
Sales Service	4.14	5.41	.001*
Quality	7.87	6.43	.000*
Attractive	4.36	5.90	.001*
Ads	3.14	5.21	.000*
Environment Concern	6.82	3.06	.000*
Promoted by Government	3.66	2.07	.000*

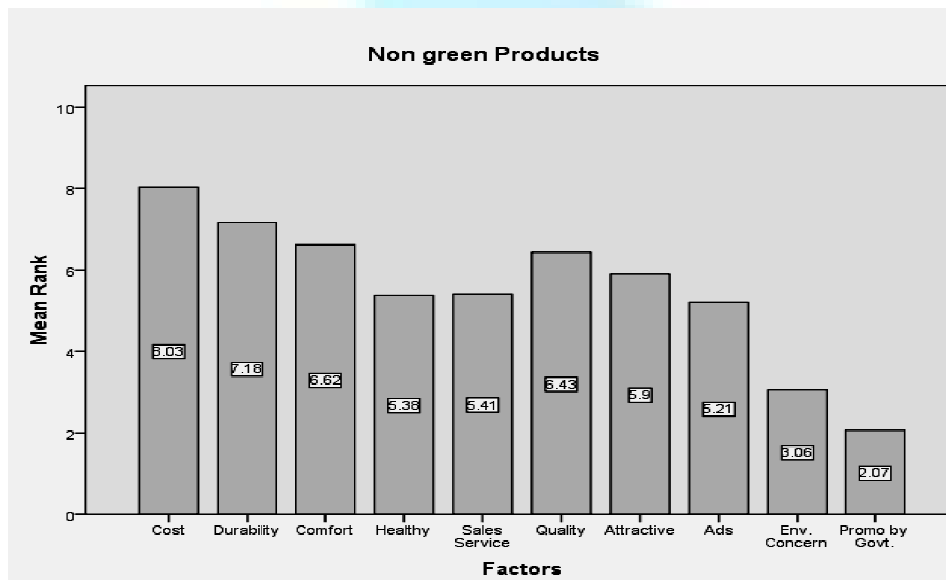
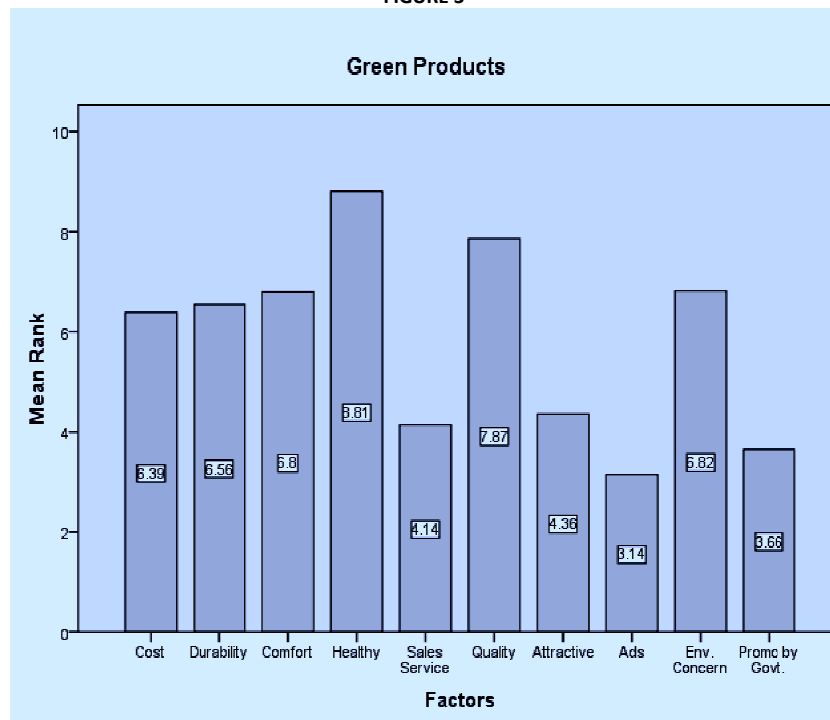
Source: Sample Survey

The second hypothesis developed that – There is no significant difference between the factors influencing the purchasing decision of green products and non green products.

There is significant difference between the factors influencing the purchasing decision of green products and non green products. From the above it is found that the p value of all the factors influencing purchase decision except comfort is less than 0.05 i.e. the null hypothesis that there is significant difference in the mean ranks of these factors among green products and non green products is rejected while the p value of the factor comfort is more than 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean ranks of green and non green products is accepted.

The graphical representation is shown below in Figure 3

FIGURE 3



From the above analysis, it was also found that in the case of green products the most important factor that influences the purchase decision is that health followed by quality, concern for environment, cost, durability, comfort, attractiveness, promoted by Government, sales service and the least important factor which influences the purchase decision is advertisement. In the case of purchase of non green products, whether government or private, high, middle or low level income, the major factor which influenced their purchase decision is cost which is followed by durability, comfort, quality, attractiveness, sales service, healthiness, advertisement and the least considered factors are concern for environment and promoted by the government.

Thus by comparing the factors influencing the purchase decision of green products and non green products, it was found that the most influencing factor while purchasing green product is health and quality, while in the case of non green products the most influencing factor is cost and durability. From this we can conclude that people purchased green product even though the cost is high i.e. people are more concerned about their health. In the case of non green products the main emphasis was given to cost and durability while health and quality was not given much importance.

FINDINGS

- It was observed that in the case of low level income people, 4.44% of the people are not aware of green products, while in the case of middle income level people only 1.11% are not aware while high income group are all aware of the term green products. So it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between income and awareness level of the green products.
- In the case of awareness of green products among government and private sector, there is no significant difference between job sector and awareness level.
- It was disclosed from the study that majority of the people are aware of green products through newspapers which is followed by magazines, television and radio.
- From the study, it was found that majority of the people i.e. 91.11% of the people are the users of green products.
- It was found that 58.89% of the people buy and use more than one green product while 21.11% of the people buy and use more than three green products and 7.78% of the people say that they buy and used only one green product and 10% of the people say they don't buy and use green products.
- It was clear that the most important factor that influences the purchase decision of green products is that people give primary important to health, which is followed by quality, concern for environment, cost, durability, comfort, attractiveness, promoted by government, sales service and the least important factor that influences the purchase decision is advertisement

- It was understood from the study that in the case of purchase of non green products whether government or private employees, high, middle or high income level group people, the major factor influenced their purchase decision is cost followed by durability, comfort, quality, attractiveness, sales service, healthiness, advertisement and the least considered factors are concern for environment and promoted by government.

SUGGESTIONS

- Government should take proper awareness programme by providing subsidies or by providing discounts on green products in order to attract the people to purchase green products and green products must be readily made available to green consumers.
- Even though people of all income level groups are aware of green products, they are not properly informed about various green products available around them. So proper measures should be taken by the government or producers to give proper propaganda to them. People must be educated to understand the difference between green product and non green product.
- Young entrepreneurs must be made aware of the benefits of green product and must be motivated to start the production of green products of good quality.
- Marketers of green products need to be more creative, dynamic and innovative to compete with the changing buying behavior among customers.
- Selecting the right name for the green product is very important to differentiate between non green products and green products.
- Companies should make every possible effort to undertake research and development in order to come up with green products in the interest of the consumers well being and society in general.

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