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**CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS GREEN PRODUCTS OF FMCG SECTOR: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The current rapid growth in the economy and the patterns of consumer's consumption and behavior worldwide are the main cause of environmental deterioration. The shortage of natural resource, which seriously affects human beings existence and development, environment protection has become the world wide focus. The growing social and regulatory concerns for the environment lead an increasing number of customers to consider green issues as a major source of strategic change. Rising awareness of global environment and social problems has forced companies to recognize these demands in their activities. Now, industries are increasingly being required to meet social and environmental specifications in the market because of rising customer pressures. Even though it is increased eco-awareness of customers during past few decades, there are some barriers to the diffusions of more ecologically oriented consumption and production styles. Therefore companies are increasingly recognizing the importance of green marketing concepts. Green marketing is the need of the hour when we are seeing environmental degradation every single day.*

**KEYWORDS**

Environment protection, green marketing, eco-friendly products.

**INTRODUCTION**

Companies are professionalizing their approach to environmental management, in pursuit of quality management and cost effective products. A number of companies fear that unless they meet these necessary requirements, they will loose their competitive edge in the markets. It asks if the company that serves and satisfies individual wants is always doing what is the best for consumers and society in the long run.

Consumers are ever greener, and their support for sustainable products and practices is growing worldwide. Whole world is identifying the need of green marketing. Green marketing can be defined as the marketing of products that are regarded to be safe for the environment. It is also known as environmental marketing or ecological marketing. Green marketing can serve as an effective tool for encouraging sale of a product by using its ecological credentials. In the long run, green marketing benefits one and all- the environment, business and human beings.

FMCG sector is a considerably large sector in the economy which has to open their eyes on eco – friendliness. The FMCG sector is one of the growing industries that concern about the green marketing issues. Green marketing incorporates a wide range of activities like product modification, changes in the production process, packaging changes, alterations in advertising, etc. Most of the marketing professionals are using green elements as powerful marketing tools. In this context, this study focuses on the consumer's attitude and attractiveness towards green products and FMCG sector.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE****GREEN MARKETING**

Green marketing came into prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s; it was first discussed much earlier. The American Marketing Association (AMA) held the first workshop on "Ecological Marketing" in 1975. The proceedings of this workshop resulted in one of the first books on green marketing entitled "Ecological Marketing" (Henion and Kinnear 1976). Since that time a number of other books on the topic have been published (Coddington 1993, and Ottman 1993).

Green marketing incorporates a broad range of activities, including product modification, changes to the production process, packaging changes, as well as modifying advertising. (Polonsky, 1994) World-wide evidence indicates people are concerned about the environment and are changing their behavior accordingly. Soonthonsmai (2007) defined green marketing as the activities taken by firms that are concern about the environment or green problems by delivering the environmentally sound goods or services to create consumers and society's satisfaction. Other definitions of green marketing as proposed by marketing scholars include social marketing, ecological marketing or environmental marketing. Harrison (1993) proposed green marketing strategy by firms through positioning the environmental benefits of green products to consumers' mindset to influence their purchasing decision. Peattie (1995) and Welford (2000) defined green marketing as the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the requirements of customers and society in a profitable and sustainable way.

Hopes for green products also have been hurt by the perception that such products are of lower quality or don't really deliver on their environmental promises. And yet the news isn't all bad, as the growing number of people willing to pay a premium for green products — from organic foods to energy-efficient appliances — attests. Green marketing has not lived up to the hopes and dreams of many managers and activists. Although public opinion polls consistently show that consumers would prefer to choose a green product over one that is less friendly to the environment when all other things are equal, those "other things" are rarely equal in the minds of consumers. (Hackett, 2000)

It's even more important to realize, however, that there is no single green-marketing strategy that is right for every company. (Prothero, and McDonagh, 1992) Despite the increasing eco-awareness in contemporary market economies, it is generally recognized that there are still considerable barriers to the diffusion of more ecologically oriented consumption styles. In lay discourse as well as in much of consumer research, these barriers are usually attributed to the motivational and practical complexity of green consumption (Hackett, 2000). Increased use of Green Marketing is depending on five possible reasons. (Polonsky 1994b)

- Organizations perceive environmental marketing to be an opportunity that can be used to achieve its objectives [Keller 1987, Shearer 1990]
- Organizations believe they have a moral obligation to be more socially responsible [Davis 1992, Keller 1987]
- Governmental bodies are forcing firms to become more responsible [Davis 1992]
- Competitors environmental activities pressure firms to change their environmental marketing activities [Davis 1992]
- Cost factors associated with waste disposal, or reductions in material usage forces firms to modify their behavior [Keller, K.L. (1993)]

Owing to the conceptual and moral complexity of 'ecologically responsible consumer behavior' and to the perplexity of ecological information, different consumers have different conceptions of ecologically oriented consumer behavior and, thus, myriad ways of acting out their primary motivation for being green consumers (Antil, 1984). These innovations aren't being pursued simply to reduce package waste. (Prothero, 1990) Food manufacturers also want to improve food preservation to enhance the taste and freshness of their products. The cost of the foods would be lower; consumers could enjoy the convenience of pre-sliced ingredients, and waste peelings (Prothero, 1990). It can be assumed that firms marketing goods with environmental characteristics will have a competitive advantage over firms marketing non-environmentally responsible alternatives. There are numerous examples of firms who have strived to become more environmentally responsible, in an attempt to better satisfy their consumer needs. (Schwepker, and Cornwell, 1991) While governmental regulation is designed to give consumers the opportunity to make better decisions or to motivate them to be more environmentally responsible, there is difficulty in establishing policies that will address all environmental issues. (Schwepker, and Cornwell, 1991). Hence, environment-friendly consumption may be characterized as highly a complex form of consumer behavior, both intellectually and morally as well as in practice.

In reality, companies that pursue green marketing encounter numerous challenges mainly from the variability of demand, un-favorable consumer perception and high cost (Gurau and Ranchhod, 2005). The key concern lies in an understanding of green consumers and their characteristics to enable firms to develop a new target and segmentation strategies (D'Souza et al., 2007).

## GREEN CONSUMERS AND GREEN PRODUCTS

In general, green product is known as an ecological product or environmental friendly product. Shamdassami et al., (1993) defined green product as the product that will not pollute the earth or deplete natural resources, and can be recycled or conserved. It is a product that has more environmentally sound content or packaging in reducing the environmental impact (Elkington and Makower, 1988; Wasik, 1996). In other words, green product refers to product that incorporates the strategies in recycling or with recycled content, reduced packaging or using less toxic materials to reduce the impact on the natural environment. Krause (1993), in his research found that consumers were becoming more concerned about their everyday habits and the impact on the environment. The outcome of this is that some of the consumers translated their environmental concern into actively purchasing green products commitment (Martin and Simintiras, 1995).

Consumers who are aware of and interested in environmental issues are called green consumers (Soonthonsmai, 2007). These green consumers usually organized petitions, boycotted manufacturers and retailers and actively promote the preservation of the planet (Fergus, 1991). Ottman (1992) reported that consumers accepted green products when their primary need for performance, quality, convenience, and affordability were met, and when they understood how a green product could help to solve environmental problems. The knowledge gap on the uses and values of green products prevents consumers in committing themselves to any purchase decisions.

### ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES

Allport (1935) defined attitude as: "A mental and neural state of readiness, which exerts a directing, influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". According to Schultz and Zelezny (2000), attitudes of environmental concern are rooted in a person's concept of self and the degree to which an individual perceives him or herself to be an integral part of the natural environment". In conclusion, attitude represents what consumers like and dislike (Blackwell et al., 2006) and consumers' product purchasing decisions are often based on their environmental attitudes (Irland, 1993; Schwepker and Cornwell, 1991).

There is a general belief among researchers and environmental activists that through purchasing environmentally friendly products or green products, products with recyclable packaging or properly disposing of non-biodegradable garbage, consumers can contribute significantly to improve the quality of the environment (Abdul-Muhmim, 2007). The quality of the environment depends critically on the level of knowledge, attitudes, values and practices of consumers (Mansaray and Abijoye, 1998). Attitudes are the most consistent explanatory factor in predicting consumers' willingness to pay for green products (Chyong et al., 2006). This means that price is not the main factor in preventing consumers from purchasing green products if they are pro-environment.

Consumers' perceived level of self-involvement towards the protection of the environment may prevent them from engaging in environmentally friendly activities such as recycling (Wiener and Sukhdial, 1990). According to Tanner and Kast (2003), green food purchases strongly facilitated by positive attitude of consumers towards environmental protection. Personal norm is the feeling of moral obligation of consumers. It is a powerful motivator of environmental behavior (Hopper and Nielson, 1991; Stern and Dietz, 1994; Vining and Ebreo, 1992). The extent to which people feel obliged to recycle is related to conservation-related product attributes (Ebreo et al., 1999). These investigations suggested that environmentally friendly behavior may be characterized as morally demanding. Consumers feel morally obligated to protect the environment and to save the limited natural resources on the earth. However, Tanner and Kast (2003) found that consumers' green food purchases were not significantly related to moral thinking.

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Straughan and Roberts (1999) segmented college students based upon ecologically conscious consumer behavior and stated that the younger individuals were likely to be more sensitive to environmental issues. The results of their study indicated that the demographic variables such as age and sex were significantly correlated with ecologically conscious consumer behavior when considered individually; and that income lacks significance. Green purchase intention correlates positively with every age and income except for education (Soonthonsmai, 2001). Many studies have shown significant differences between men and women in environmental attitudes (Brown and Harris, 1992; Tikka et al., 2000) with men having more negative attitudes towards the environment compared to women (Eagly, 1987; Tikka et al., 2000). Women were more likely to buy green product because they believe the product was better for the environment (Mainieri et al., 1997).

## RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

Creating customer satisfaction and building long term customer relationship are some of the primary objectives firms try to achieve to sustain their business in the competitive business world. Environmental sustainability is a matter which cannot be ignored, so business organizations have to recognize the competitive advantages and business opportunities to be gained from green marketing. 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. Hence many companies started to be more socially responsive towards developing environmentally friendly activities and putting in numerous efforts to keep in-step with the environmental movement. As a result, it is vital to explore their attitude towards green products.

### THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY ARE:-

- To compare gender with attitude towards environment and green products.
- To study consumer attitude towards green marketing.
- To investigate the consumers attractiveness towards green products in FMCG sector and their impact on purchasing decision.
- To evaluate consumer attitudes and perception regarding green products in FMCG sector under five value added areas such as product, price, place, promotion and package that lead towards the motivation of consumption.



## HYPOTHESES

Based on the theoretical and empirical literatures, the following hypotheses were proposed.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is significant difference between male and female in their environmental attitudes.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is significant difference between male and female in their attitude towards green products.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is relative importance of the items considered desirable while buying green products.

**Hypothesis 4:** The correlation of each of the concepts namely product, price, place, promotion and package and these variables have significant impact on the consumers buying decisions.

## METHODOLOGY

### DATA COLLECTION

The study is an Empirical one. In order to obtain reliable information from the respondents, attempt has been made to obtain primary data. For that purpose, a detailed questionnaire was administered. Personal interviews and observations were also made. Convenience sampling was used. The questionnaire comprises of 21 questions including both closed and open ended questions. The respondents were asked to rate each item on a 5point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The sample was employed 150 respondents from Trivandrum, Kollam and Alleppey districts of South Kerala. Respondent's category comprised with students, academic staffs, office workers, housewives, business people and managers of several companies those who have much exposure to the FMCG category.

### SAMPLE PROFILE

District	Number of Respondents
Trivandrum	66
Kollam	47
Alleppey	37
Total	150

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

### ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Descriptive statistical techniques were utilized to analyze data with the help of SPSS package. The major statistical tools which were used in this study are central tendency (mean), percentage analysis, hypothesis testing and correlation analysis. Percentage values were used to identify the contribution of various categories of each variable. The central tendency values used to identify the nature of attractiveness towards each variable of eco-friendliness.

### HYPOTHESIS 1 & 2: INDEPENDENT SAMPLE TEST

This part of the analysis used the independent sample t-test for the measurement of differences in consumer's attitude on environment and green products between genders.

TABLE 6.1: T-TEST RESULTS ON ATTITUDE ON ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN PRODUCTS BY GENDER

Variable	Gender (Mean)		t-value	Remarks at 5% level
	Male	Female		
Attitudes on environment	24.67	25.33	0.11	Not significant
Attitude on green product	27	23	0.58	Not significant

Table provides the results of t-test and it shows that there were no significant differences between gender (male and female) in their attitude towards environment and green products.

### HYPOTHESIS 3: WEIGHTED AVERAGE

At the initial stage, important factors are identified which are considered desirable while buying green products. Sometimes the items in a series may not have equal importance. The weighted average mean is used whenever the relative importance of the items in a series differs. While calculating the weighted average, each item is given a weight judged by its relative importance.

TABLE 6.2: WEIGHTED AVERAGE

Particulars	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
Efficiency and cost effectiveness	19	35	60	22	14
Health and safety	24	68	29	22	7
Performance	14	69	30	30	7
Promotion	18	26	58	38	10
Brand and quality	28	61	32	18	11
Convenience	16	31	72	70	11

The table indicates that the health and safety, brand and quality are the factors that the consumers consider while buying green products. Performance, efficiency and cost effectiveness are the next important items that are considered.

### HYPOTHESIS 4: $\chi^2$ TEST OF GOODNESS OF FIT AND CORRELATION ANALYSIS

$\chi^2$  test is used to know whether the observed values are consistent which may be obtained under some hypothesis. If the observed values are close to the expected values under a hypothesis the fit is said to be good.

$\chi^2$  test is used to analyze the goodness of fit between the five value added P's ( ie product, Price, Place, Promotion and Package).

TABLE 6.3: OBSERVED FREQUENCY AND EXPECTED FREQUENCY

Observed Frequency O	Expected Frequency E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
52	56.25	18.06	0.321
21	18.75	5.06	0.27
19	18.75	0.06	0.003
38	37.5	0.25	0.007
20	18.75	1.56	0.08

$$\sum (O-E)^2/E = 0.681$$

(Expected frequencies are obtained by dividing the total frequency in the ratio 3:1:1:2:1)

TABLE 6.4:  $\chi^2$  TEST OF GOODNESS OF FIT

Variable	Calculated $\chi^2$ value	Remark at 5% level
5 P's (Product, Price, Place, Promotion and Package)	0.681	Fit

The results show that there is goodness of fit between the 5 P's.

Relationship between key variables of green marketing (ie Product, Price, Place, Promotion and Package are independent variables and customer's purchase decision (dependent variable). The relationship can be varied according to the demographic variables like age, gender, education; etc. Correlation analysis helps in determining the degree of relationship between two or more variables. The analysis is used to measure the degree of relationship between the independent variables and the dependant variable. Mean variances are taken between each of the independent variables and the purchase decision of the consumers.

TABLE 6.5: DEGREE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TESTABLE VARIABLES

Independent Variable	Dependant Variable	Pearson's Correlation co-efficient
Product	Purchase decision	0.807
Price	"	0.482
Place	"	0.333
Promotion	"	0.603
Package	"	0.775

The above analysis clearly shows that environment friendly products and packages make significant impact on customers buying decision. The marketing information with the environment friendly product information will also have significant impact on customers buying decision. Customers will not consider much about the price and place/distribution of the environment friendly product.

#### CONSUMER BUYING INTENTION

Consumer buying intention was measured on two broad dimensions i.e. price sensitivity and brand consciousness in a 3-point scale and the results obtained from are as follows:

**1-PURCHASE OF COSTLY PRODUCTS** - A overwhelming majority (81%) of the respondents agree to the statement that 'I would like to purchase those products which are costlier but causing less environmental pollution', with 9 % as undecided and 8 % disagreed.

**2-PURCHASE OF CHEAP PRODUCTS** -A great majority (71%) of the respondents agree that 'I would not like to purchase those products which are cheap but causing environmental pollution' 15% undecided and 14 % disagreed.

**3- PURCHASE OF INFERIOR QUALITY PRODUCTS** - A great majority (72%) of the respondents are agree that 'I would like to purchase those products which are inferior in quality but causing less environmental pollution', with 19% as undecided and 9% disagreed.

**4- PURCHASE OF QUALITY PRODUCTS** - More than half (61%) of the respondents agree with the statement that 'I would not like to purchase those products which are good in quality but causing environmental pollution', 10% said its undecided and 29% disagreed.

#### CONCLUSION

Consumers select products and new innovations that offer benefits they desire. Green Marketing must satisfy two objectives: improved environmental quality and customer satisfaction. The marketer need to know what is the relevance of Social Marketing in order to protect the environment and to improve the quality of life and are concerned with issues that include conservation of natural resources.

The result indicated that there is no difference between gender in their environmental attitudes and their attitudes on Green Products and also there is no significant difference between men and women in environmental attitudes. The study shows that consumers are ready to pay more prices for the products which are causing less environmental pollution. Green Marketing requires applying good marketing principles to make green products desirable for consumers. Business organizations have to follow strategies in order to get benefits from the environmentally friendly approach. Therefore, in the product strategy, marketers can identify customers environmental needs and developed products this issue, produce more environmentally responsible packages.

As the current study is not based on any specific green product , further investigation is required to study consumers attitude on the types of green products in the market. The perceived behavioral barriers are additional significant predictors of environmental behavior ( Kalafatis et al .,1999).The future success of the product and services will depend on credibly communicating and delivering consumer's desired value in the market place, then only business will go onto a more sustainable path.

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