



IMPACT OF GREEN MARKETING STRATEGIES ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the impact of green marketing strategies on consumer buying behavior in Ethiopian fresh fruit and vegetable export companies. To achieve this, both primary and secondary data sources were utilized. Primary data were collected by conducting a survey using a simple random sampling technique, targeting a specific population sample. This survey was carried out using a structured questionnaire, which successfully gathered 116 valid responses. These responses were subsequently analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. In addition to primary data, secondary data were also utilized in this study. This involved a comprehensive review of existing literature and previous research on green marketing strategies. The findings from this study indicate that green marketing strategies have a partial influence on consumer buying decisions. Based on these results, the study recommends that marketers should enhance their marketing tactics by employing all the selected six green marketing strategies in an integrated manner to achieve the best possible outcomes for consumers. Furthermore, the study suggests that future research should delve deeper into the relationships identified in this work. It should also investigate potential mediating and moderating factors affecting these relationships. This expanded scope would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Additionally, the insights gained from this research are valuable for fresh fruit and vegetable exporters, policymakers, and other stakeholders who are responsible for business development to encourage consumer buying behavior and enhance the profitability of exports through effective green marketing strategies.

KEYWORDS: Green marketing strategy, Green products, Green distributions, Green prices, Green promotions, Consumer buying behavior

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era characterized by heightened environmental awareness and increasing consumer demand for sustainable practices, the consumer goods sector faces a pivotal moment. As a major contributor to global environmental issues, such as resource depletion, pollution, and waste generation, the sector is under mounting pressure to implement sustainable practices. In this context, green marketing strategies have become essential for companies striving to balance environmental responsibilities with business goals (Brockhaus et al., 2016). Over recent decades, environmental concern has attracted significant interest from multinational corporations, governments, academics, and other stakeholders. The concept of green marketing emerged in the 1970s, with green products gaining popularity in the 1990s. Consumers are becoming more environmentally conscious (Laroche et al., 2001). Both companies and consumers are now more mindful of green marketing (Paettie & Crane, 2005). Today's marketplace is notably more eco-friendly compared to the past, with consumers increasingly aware of their shopping behaviors and purchases. They are concerned about the planet and are eager to contribute to its longevity and well-being (Laroche et al., 2001). The term "green marketing" has become well-integrated into the current landscape. Brands adhering to the four Ps of marketing product, price, promotion, and place in ways that protect the environment and sustain sustainability can quickly gain consumer influence (Belz, 2006). This establishes an early link between the brand and the consumer, involving a comprehensive approach (Bormane et al., 2017). Developing a green marketing strategy includes options such as green products, green prices, green packaging, and green communication. Green products refer to eco-friendly



items, while green packaging focuses on reducing environmental damage (Drucker, 2006). Green prices reflect environmental concerns that are passed on to the consumer. Green communication, following green marketing efforts, fosters a positive brand image and conveys the company's environmental and social concerns (Belch & Belch, 2018). Investigating the impact of green marketing on consumer buying behavior has become a crucial area of research. This focus aims to understand how green marketing elements influence consumer preferences and decision-making processes. Studies have highlighted that various aspects of green marketing, such as environmentally friendly product features, eco-conscious pricing strategies, and sustainable promotional efforts, significantly alter consumer purchasing behavior (Sah, 2016; Boztepe, 2012). These green marketing components enable companies to effectively attract their environmentally aware target audience. Additionally, they play a pivotal role in shaping market dynamics by encouraging consumers to adopt more sustainable consumption patterns (De Jesus et al., 2021). By aligning marketing strategies with environmental values, companies not only respond to consumer demand but also contribute to broader efforts aimed at promoting sustainability and environmental stewardship.

The literature on green marketing extensively discusses its crucial role in encouraging consumers to adopt environmentally friendly consumption habits. By integrating green marketing strategies into their business practices, corporations can nurture positive customer behavior, build strong brand loyalty and trust, and create an environmentally conscious market. This is especially important in an increasingly interconnected world. The foundation of this approach lies in a corporate commitment to environmental sustainability. The primary goal of the present study is to explore the impact of green marketing strategies on consumer buying behavior in developing countries, with a specific focus on Ethiopia. By surveying this region, the study aims to provide insights into how green marketing strategies can influence consumer decisions and promote sustainable consumption patterns in developing markets.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Green Marketing

In the literature, "green marketing" encompasses concepts such as "ecological marketing," "sustainable marketing," and "green consumption," all of which require incorporating environmental considerations into marketing efforts (Crane, 2011). The concept of green marketing involves a variety of activities aimed at protecting the environment, upholding consumer rights, and satisfying consumer needs and desires. In today's society, consumers are increasingly concerned about their safety and demand environmentally friendly products, contributing to a greener world. Green marketing addresses issues such as deceptive practices, grey marketing, and food contamination while also shielding customers from unethical business practices. Nowadays, a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, agencies, NGOs, and commercial organizations, are committed to this responsibility. Unfortunately, many people still believe that green marketing only pertains to the advertising or promotion of products with environmental features. Additionally, consumers often associate green marketing with terms like phosphate-free, recyclable, refillable, ozone-friendly, and environmentally friendly (Matin & Alauddin, 2016).

The term "green marketing" refers to the process of highlighting products or services that are generally environmentally friendly or have been produced in a manner that minimizes environmental impact (Alikor et al., 2022). It involves integrating sustainability and environmental considerations into various marketing practices such as product design, packaging, distribution, and promotions (Kwarto et al., 2022). Green marketing essentially entails promoting products that are considered sustainable for the environment (Alikor et al., 2022). This involves a wide range of activities, including adjusting product features, modifying production processes, altering packaging, and adapting advertising strategies (Okoli et al., 2022).

2.2 Green Marketing Mix

The concept of the "green marketing mix" was introduced in 1989. The Environmental Protection Agency of the Queensland government approached green marketing by defining it in a way similar to traditional marketing, using the 4Ps: product, price, place, and promotion. The agency described green marketing as the process of developing and promoting products and services that meet customers' demands for quality, performance, affordability, and convenience while simultaneously ensuring that these products and services do not harm the environment. This approach effectively adapted the classic 4Ps of marketing to fit within an environmentally friendly framework, thereby creating a green context for marketing practices (De Craecker and De Wulf, 2009).



2.3 Green Marketing Strategy

The concept of green marketing strategy encompasses a collection of marketing tools and components that enable a company to effectively reach its target market and attain organizational objectives while minimizing negative impacts on the natural environment (Al-Salaymeh, 2013). Additionally, it enhances product sales by appealing to environmentally conscious consumers. Active engagement in environmental conservation not only encourages individuals to purchase green products but also promotes sustainable development within the country (Gopalakrishnan and Muruganandam, 2013).

2.3.1 Eco-labeling

Eco-labels represent initiatives undertaken by organizations to promote environmental preservation, often supported by third-party certification. These certifications, known as eco-labels, are leveraged by companies as a competitive edge to attract more customers, demonstrating their commitment to offering environmentally friendly and health-conscious products (Ng & Wong, 2015). The practice of eco-labeling serves dual purposes: as a marketing strategy to enhance consumer appeal and as a response to the challenges posed by climate change and global warming (Bernard et al., 2015).

2.3.2 Eco-Branding

Eco-branding serves to differentiate a brand based on its environmental advantages. It aims to distinguish a product from numerous others available on the market, highlighting its environmental benefits and setting it apart. This branding strategy allows eco-brands to clearly distinguish between environmentally friendly products and those that are not (Bhatia & Jain, 2013). By emphasizing these environmental attributes, eco-branding helps products stand out in a crowded marketplace, appealing specifically to consumers who prioritize sustainability in their purchasing decisions.

2.3.3 Green Products

A product can be classified as "green" if its production process is environmentally friendly and minimizes harm to the environment. It is the responsibility of every business to reduce environmental pollution during manufacturing. This includes sustainably sourcing raw materials to preserve natural resources. Effective waste management is crucial in this regard. Businesses should also focus on eco-friendly product design and packaging that minimize pollution and potential hazards. Despite the significant initial costs associated with these improvements, they are justified by the potential increase in product sales. Implementing reverse logistics, where customers return used packaging, wrapping, and products to the business, can greatly contribute to environmental preservation (Arseculeratne and Yazdanifard, 2014).

2.3.4 Green Distributions

The term "green distribution" refers to selecting distribution channels that minimize environmental impact. A significant portion of environmental pollution occurs during the transportation of goods, necessitating careful consideration from businesses regarding safety measures during delivery (Eneizan et al., 2015). Green distribution involves using environmentally friendly transportation and energy sources, expanding green spaces, and ensuring that waste management practices are safe for human health (Cahyanti & Iliyawati, 2018). According to others, green distribution channels are characterized by product packaging that minimizes waste and uses eco-friendly materials for transport to distribution points. Transportation methods focus on reducing environmental impact, such as lowering energy consumption and emissions. Strategic decisions about where and when products are available also play a crucial role in attracting customers, aligning with the company's desired image, and distinguishing it from competitors.

2.3.5 Green Prices

According to Hashem and Al-Rifai (2011), green pricing pertains to the pricing strategy shaped by a company's policies and regulations concerning environmental considerations, which may be mandated by corporate directives or driven by internal initiatives. Green products often incur higher initial costs, yet they are typically more economical in the long term (Fan and Zeng, 2011). Green pricing also reflects consumers' willingness to pay a premium for products that offer guaranteed environmental benefits (Olawaju & Ganiyu, 2021). Thus, green pricing not only aligns with corporate environmental strategies but also responds to consumer demand for sustainable products, potentially enhancing the economic viability of environmentally friendly offerings over time.



2.3.6 Green Promotions

Green marketing also encompasses promoting a company's image and offerings. Sales promotions, direct marketing, public relations, and advertising are among the methods used to communicate the message of environmental responsibility to customers, with public relations and advertising being the most commonly utilized platforms for showcasing a company's green initiatives. Adopting environmentally friendly practices, which aim to connect businesses with communities, often requires significant public relations efforts. Green advertising serves the dual purposes of promoting products and justifying their features and pricing (Arseculeratne and Yazdanifard, 2014). For companies, green promotional programs serve as effective tools for informing stakeholders about their commitment to environmental preservation as well as showcasing their efforts and accomplishments in sustainability (Belz and Peattie, 2009; Dahlstrom, 2011).

2.4 Consumer Buying Behavior

Consumer buying behavior refers to the actions and decisions individuals make when purchasing goods or services. In the realm of green marketing, consumer behavior revolves around choosing products that are environmentally friendly and manufactured using sustainable production methods (Herring & Sorrel, 2009). Consumers often derive satisfaction from making environmentally conscious purchasing decisions. Strategies such as eco-labeling, green branding, and green advertising are employed to influence consumers towards choosing environmentally friendly products (Akenji, 2014). These techniques aim to educate and persuade consumers about the environmental benefits of certain products, thereby encouraging them to align their buying habits with their environmental values and preferences.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is designed to explore how green marketing strategies influence consumer buying behavior in Ethiopia. The research targets managers or senior employees of companies involved in exporting fresh fruits and vegetables. Due to fluctuating numbers of active exporters in the sector from year to year, the study focuses specifically on firms that actively exported fruits and vegetables during the fiscal year 2021/22 G.C., as identified by data from the National Bank of Ethiopia, which recorded 206 active exporters during this period. To determine the study's sample size, the Ashish-Kumar formula was used, recommending a sample of 135 exporters of fruits and vegetables for a 95% confidence level and a margin of error (p) of 0.5. The study employs a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," to score responses from participants. Data collection utilized a simple random sampling method, and analysis was conducted using SPSS version 24. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze and interpret the findings. The study findings indicate that the variables examined demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability, as evidenced by Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.70, as per the criteria established by Sekaran (1992), ensuring the robustness and reliability of the data collected for this research.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the total of 135 questionnaires distributed for the study, 116 questionnaires were completed and returned, representing a response rate of 85.93%. Each completed questionnaire was deemed suitable and included in the analysis. With 116 respondents, the study proceeded with this effective sample size for all discussions and analyses, ensuring that the data collected were sufficient and representative of the research objectives.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

In this study, descriptive analysis was conducted to assess the level of agreement with various variables. Mean and standard deviation were utilized to measure the extent of variation from the average response. The overall mean of the descriptive statistics for the factors including eco-labeling, eco-branding, green products, green distribution, green prices, and green promotions was found to be 3.4139, 3.2026, 3.5500, 3.2833, 3.2222, and 2.7593, respectively, with corresponding standard deviations of 0.88710, 0.79422, 0.87722, 0.93766, 0.78485, and 1.00747. These results indicate that respondents generally exhibited a moderate level of agreement across most factors. Moreover, the standard deviation values illustrate the extent of variability in respondents' perceptions regarding external influences and performance claims.

4.2 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the impact of several independent variables on a single dependent variable. The primary objective was to assess the influence of green marketing strategies on consumer



buying behavior. The study included six independent variables: Eco-Labeling (ELA), Eco-Branding (EBR), Green Products (GPR), Green Distribution (GDS), Green Prices (GPC), and Green Promotions (GPM). The dependent variable under scrutiny was Consumer Buying Behavior (CBB). The findings of the analysis are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1: Significance of the Regression Result

Model	Regression Coefficients ^a									
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics		VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance		
1 (Constant)	-.555	.764		-.727	.473	-2.117	1.007			
ELA	-.446	.283	-.365	-1.577	.126	-1.025	.133	.261	3.835	
EBR	.501	.237	.387	2.115	.043	.017	.985	.417	2.398	
GPR	.302	.281	.244	1.077	.290	-.272	.876	.273	3.665	
GDS	.126	.259	.110	.484	.632	-.405	.656	.268	3.731	
GPC	.634	.205	.487	3.098	.004	.215	1.052	.564	1.772	
GPM	.148	.130	.141	1.142	.263	-.117	.414	.920	1.087	

a. Dependent Variable: CBB

Source: SPSS Version 24 Output

Therefore, the regression results indicate that eco-branding and green prices have a significant positive relationship with consumer buying behavior. On the other hand, eco-labeling, green products, green distributions, and green promotions show a non-significant relationship with consumer buying behavior. Specifically, Eco-Branding (EBR) has a coefficient (β) of 0.387 with a significant p-value of 0.043, Green Products (GPR) has a coefficient of 0.244 with a p-value of 0.290, Green Distribution (GDS) has a coefficient of 0.110 with a p-value of 0.632, Green Prices (GPC) shows a coefficient of 0.487 with a significant p-value of 0.004, and Green Promotions (GPM) has a coefficient of 0.141 with a p-value of 0.263. On the other hand, Eco-Labeling (ELA) demonstrates a coefficient of $\beta = -0.365$ with a p-value of 0.126, indicating a non-significant negative relationship.

The analysis of collinearity in the regression coefficients table involved assessing Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values, which serve as benchmarks for detecting collinearity problems. As indicated in Table 1, the tolerance values range from 0.261 to 0.920, while VIF values range between 1.087 and 3.835. According to Pallant (2010), collinearity concerns typically arise when tolerance values drop below 0.1 or VIF values exceed 10. In this study, these thresholds are not breached, suggesting that multicollinearity is not an issue in this particular analysis.

Table 2: Model Summary Result
Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
						F Change	df1	df2		
1	.772 ^a	.596	.512	.74210	.596	7.118	6	29	.000	1.910

a. Predictors: (Constant), ELA, EBR, GPR, GDS, GPC, GPM

b. Dependent Variable: CBB

The study included six independent variables in its model, and the adjusted R-squared indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (consumer buying behavior) explained by the model. In this case, the R-squared value is 0.596, suggesting that 59.6% of the variation in consumer buying behavior can be attributed to fluctuations in green marketing strategy factors, namely eco-labeling, eco-branding, green products, green distributions, green prices, and green promotions. The adjusted R-squared, which accounts for the number of predictors in the model, is 0.512, indicating that 51.2% of the variation in consumer buying behavior is explained when considering the complexity of the model.



Table 3: ANOVA Result
ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	23.519	6	3.920	7.118	.000 ^b
Residual	15.971	29	.551		
Total	39.490	35			

a. Predictors: (Constant), ELA, EBR, GPR, GDS, GPC, GPM

b. Dependent Variable: CBB

The predictor variables listed in Table 3 significantly contribute to the model. The significance of the multiple regression coefficients was assessed using the ANOVA table, where the F-test was employed to evaluate the overall significance of the model. In this case, the F-statistic value of 7.118 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates that the dependent variable is significantly influenced by the independent variables. This suggests that eco-labeling, eco-branding, green products, green distribution, green pricing, and green promotion collectively explain the variations in consumer buying behavior. Therefore, green marketing strategies have a substantial impact on consumer buying behavior.

4.3 Test of Hypotheses

In a multiple regression analysis conducted to examine six hypotheses developed in this study, Table 1 presents the findings. The beta coefficients for the factors eco-branding (EBR), green products (GPR), green distribution (GDS), green prices (GPC), and green promotions (GPM) were found to be 0.387, 0.244, 0.110, 0.487, and 0.141, respectively, indicating a positive influence on organizational performance. The corresponding p-values were 0.043, 0.290, 0.632, 0.004, and 0.263. On the contrary, Eco-Labeling (ELA) demonstrates a coefficient of $\beta = -0.365$ with a p-value of 0.126, indicating a non-significant negative relationship. Notably, EBR and GPC demonstrated p-values below the study's significance level ($p < 0.05$), leading to acceptance of the hypotheses associated with these variables. Conversely, hypotheses related to ELA, GPR, GDS, and GPM were rejected. Thus, the identified green marketing strategies have a partially significant impact on consumer buying behavior in the Ethiopian fresh fruit and vegetable export industry.

5. CONCLUSION

Exports have become increasingly crucial for economic growth and foreign exchange generation in many countries, including Ethiopia. They are often viewed as pivotal for the development of developing nations, as they bolster national exports and elevate the living standards of citizens. However, exporters face various challenges that can impede their contributions to economic growth. This study focuses on exploring how green marketing strategies affect consumer buying behavior in Ethiopia's fresh fruit and vegetable export industry. The findings indicate that consumer buying behavior in this sector is significantly positively influenced by eco-branding and green pricing strategies. In contrast, factors such as eco-labeling, the availability of green products, distribution strategies, and promotional efforts showed no significant impact on consumer behavior in this specific study. Overall, the study concludes that while green marketing strategies do exert partial influence on consumer buying behavior. Therefore, this research aims to enrich the existing literature on green marketing strategies and consumer buying behavior. Despite attention from scholars and policymakers, fundamental questions remain inadequately explored, particularly regarding the intricate relationship between green marketing strategies and consumer decision-making processes. Analyzing and reviewing six key factors eco-labeling, eco-branding, green products, pricing strategies, distribution channels, and promotional activities underscored the partial influence of green marketing strategies on consumer behavior in the Ethiopian fresh fruit and vegetable export industry.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Government institutions play a crucial role in enhancing Ethiopia's fruit and vegetable consumer buying behavior and export performance. It is imperative to focus on creating a supportive policy environment and enhancing the reliability of export support services. Furthermore, governments at all levels should prioritize strategies to enact laws and regulations and conduct campaigns aimed at environmental protection and sustainability, thereby safeguarding both the planet and its inhabitants. In addition to policy measures, governments should leverage international high-technology imports and domestic research capabilities to enhance the competitiveness of the fruit and vegetable export sector. Campaigns promoting environmental awareness can effectively reduce pollution and foster a sense of social



responsibility towards nature among the populace. Moreover, policymakers need to develop and enforce regulations that mitigate the risks associated with exporting, including trade agreements and legal frameworks for dispute resolution. Concurrently, exporters determine the right green digital marketing strategy by taking into consideration the variables that can predict consumers' buying behavior. Additionally they should enhance their product image through effective advertising, thereby boosting consumer preference for green products and increasing sales and profitability. Consumers, in turn, should educate themselves on climate change, green products, and environmental issues through mass media and advertising channels. This awareness can stimulate opportunities for new and existing businesses to invest in green products. Organizations and brands can also emphasize eco-friendly packaging in their public communications to target customers and enhance their brand reputation.

7. LIMITATION DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study acknowledges several limitations that can guide future research directions. Firstly, the sample was limited to medium and large firms, suggesting a need for further investigation into how green marketing strategies impact small and micro firms. Secondly, the study focused exclusively on the fresh fruit and vegetable industry, suggesting future research should explore other industry where such studies are less common, aiming to validate and generalize findings across diverse contexts. Thirdly, the study examined a restricted set of dimensions within green marketing strategy, suggesting the inclusion of additional variables to comprehensively analyze consumer responses to all facets of green marketing strategy efforts. Fourthly, the research was confined to customers of in Ethiopia, indicating the potential for applying the model in different countries for broader insights. Moreover, given the rapid evolution of green marketing driven by technological advancements and shifting consumer preferences, longitudinal studies could offer deeper insights into the long-term impacts of green marketing strategies on consumer purchasing patterns. Conclusively, this study provides a comprehensive view of the transformative potential inherent in green marketing strategies and encourages further exploration by researchers into this burgeoning area of research.

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