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CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND PURCHASE ATTITUDE TOWARDS GREEN PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT
Of late consumers are fascinated by the word green when it comes to products and services. Their concern for environment sustainability and healthy lifestyle are pushing them to prefer green products. This study was conducted to explore the awareness levels of consumers towards green products in Kodagu, a small coffee growing district of Karnataka. The data collected was from 160 respondents through a structured questionnaire. Respondents opinions on the awareness of green products, their perception about its features and pricing were sought to understand their purchase behavior. From the responses it can be observed that customers are aware of green products and are keen on shifting to purchasing green products in certain categories especially for long term health benefits and for environment sustainability.

KEY WORDS: *Green Products, Green Marketing, Consumer Awareness, Consumer Perception, Purchase Behavior*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Green Products became popular in the 1990s in the West but its level of popularity in not very high in the Indian markets. This may be due to the fact that there is less awareness on environmental and global warming issues, though there is a gradual shift in consumer preferences of late. Green products are those which are made with eco-friendly inputs and which is less or not at all deleterious to the environment during its manufacture, use and disposal. Such products safeguard the health of human beings. They include products made from recycled materials, using renewable energy and leave little or no carbon footprints.

Green Marketing is the production and promotion of products and services that have a positive impact on the planet. It involves incorporating sustainability principles into the different aspects of marketing such as product design, package and promotion. Green Marketing is becoming more popular today as people world over are becoming concerned with environmental issues and the need for saving their planet. Green Marketing strategies include designing eco-friendly products using natural inputs, eco-friendly packaging, using recycled materials, using environmental friendly modes of promotion and distribution, reducing the emission of greenhouse gases throughout the whole process, investing profits in renewable energy and to summarize adopting sustainable practices.

Today's consumers are very enlightened and are conscious of the environmental concerns. Sustainability in all activities is being talked of off late. It is becoming like a movement.

Green Products do come with a cost and this deterring factor for consumers. Continuous research and innovation is necessary to come out with eco-friendly products and hence this adds on to the cost. Also some categories of green products do not perform as effectively as the traditional products. Also it is very rare to find variety in green products.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the concept of green products.
2. To explore the level of awareness of green products.
3. To understand the perception of consumers towards green products
4. To study the level of price on the purchase intention/ decision
5. To study the purchase behavior of consumers towards green products.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The conceptual scope of this study is confined to the concept of understanding the perception of consumers towards green products. The geographical scope is limited to the district of Kodagu. Kodagu district also called as Coorg, is a small, picturesque district in the state of Karnataka. It is known for its coffee, aesthetic beauty attracting tourists from all over the world and for its unique culture and traditions and also its cuisine.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The environment today is extremely fragile and the ecosystem is bearing the brunt of technological development. To satisfy the varied demands of consumers, manufacturers and marketers are going to any extent without thinking twice about its consequences on the environment and ecosystem as also on the quality of life. The world is facing a huge challenge to usher in sustainability in all developmental activities. Concerns about climate change, carbon footprints, quality of life of all organisms, conservation of natural resources, environment pollution etc. are being widely

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discussed world over. Green marketing and green products are concepts which are accorded highest priority by many manufacturers and marketers today. The need of the hour is that it should scale down to the consumers. Awareness and acceptance is important.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a study on consumer perception towards green products, Lavanya & Madan Kumar (2019) found that consumer awareness and acceptance of green products is very encouraging. Consumers are willing to purchase products that very environment friendly. A similar study was conducted by Bikramjit Singh Hundal (2019), where he found consumer's acceptability quite low due to lack of awareness of the concept of green products, no proactive promotions and no strict regulations by organizations. Hence he called upon organizations to promote green products as he found customer preferences shifting to environment friendly products.

Gopal Thapa (2019) studied the consumer perception towards green products in Nepal and he concluded that consumers though have knowledge of green products but this is quite superficial. Also price deters consumers from purchasing green products and so also the promotion where consumers feel that green claims are not genuine. But consumers show favorable preference because of eco-friendly aspect of green products. A similar study by Singh & Poonam Kumari (2021) in Pune city found that customers are aware and willing to purchase green products because of environmental benefits but price is a major concern.

Subatra (2020) studied consumer perception of green products in Salem where he found that consumers have a positive attitude and preferred green labeled products as also recycled products. It is heartening to find that price had no effect on the purchase decision. In a similar study in Bengaluru by Guruswamy & Chakraborty (2020), it was found that consumer's environmental concerns influence their decision to buy green products. This study also highlighted the packaging and design aspect too as impacting factors for their choice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is an exploratory one based on primary data which was collected through a structured questionnaire. A convenient sampling technique was used to collect data from a sample of 160 respondents. Descriptive statistical tools (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) was
used for analyzing and interpreting the data.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

To understand the purchase attitude and purchase behavior of respondents towards green products, a socio-economic profile of respondents is required which is depicted in the following table.

Table1: Demographic Details of Respondents

Variable	Category	Number	%	Variable	Category	Number	%
Gender	Male	76	47.50	Occupation	Student	25	15.63
	Female	84	52.50		Self-Employed	27	16.88
Age	< 20 years	17	10.63		Private sector	53	33.13
	20-30 years	35	21.88		Government Sector	37	23.13
	30-45 years	56	35.00		Agriculturist	18	11.25
	45-60 years	33	20.63	Income	<15K	16	10.00
	>60 years	19	11.88		15-30K	42	26.25
Education level	SSLC	16	10.00		30-45K	49	30.63
	PUC	32	20.00		45-60K	24	15.00
	Graduate	86	53.75		>60K	29	18.13
	PG	26	16.25				

It can be observed from the above table that 47% of the respondents were male and 52% female. Most of the respondents in this study were in the age group of 30 to 45 years, followed by 20 to 30 years and 45 to 60 years. Around 70% of the respondents are graduates. Employees in the private sector formed 33% of the sample and 23% those working in the government sector. 11% of the sample was agriculturists and 15% were students.

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Table 2: Awareness of Green Products

Variable	Categories	Num	%
Aware	YES	158	98.75
	NO	2	1.25
Source of Knowledge	Media	155	96.875
	Family/Friends/Peer groups	72	45
	Internet	46	28.75
	Seminars/Conferences	17	10.625
	Retailers/Shops	29	18.125
	Others	0	0

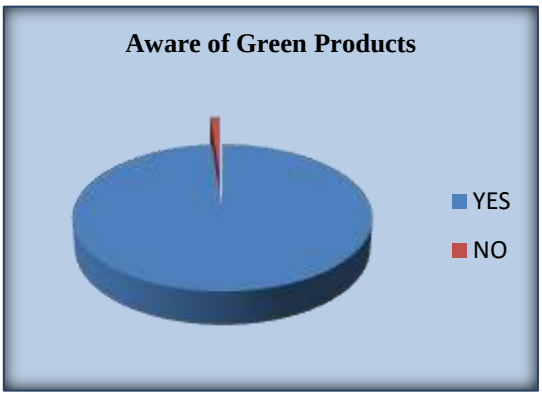


Fig. 1 Awareness of Green Products

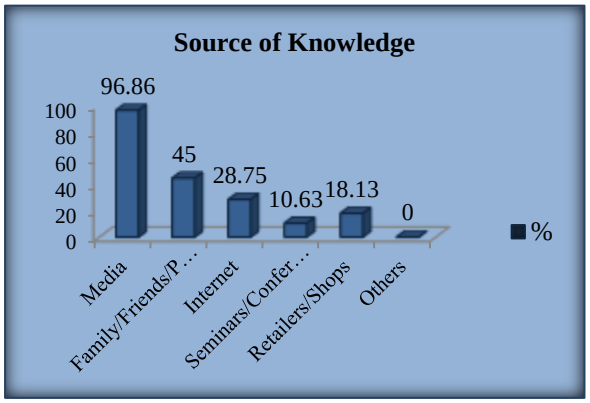


Fig. 2 Source of Knowledge about Green Products

It is very heartening to note that 98.75% of the respondents are aware of green products. The source of all information regarding green products is the Media for 97% of the respondents. The next important source was family, friends and peer groups. Internet platforms are also playing an important role in popularizing and orienting consumers on green products. Seminars on the theme of Green Marketing & Green Products and environment sustainability are also an influencing source.

Table 3: Perceptions (Opinions) regarding Green Products

Perceptions (Opinions) regarding Green Products (N= 160)						
	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	No Opinion (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Weighted Mean
Made with natural ingredients	39.4	38.2	8.1	14.3	0	4.03
Eco-friendly packaging	7.6	30	26.3	34.3	1.8	3.07
Biodegradable/ environment friendly	30	7.6	26.2	34.4	1.8	3.79
Saving energy	4	33	38	20	5	3.11
Reusable/recyclable	10	70	12.5	7.5	0	3.83
Safe for human use	73.1	15.1	7.5	4.3	0	4.56
Long term health benefits	65.6	12.6	16.2	5.6	0	4.38

The above table shows the perceptions of respondents regarding green products. Five point Likert scale was used to understand the perception towards green products. A high percentage agree that green products mean one that is made using natural ingredients , safe for human use , which has long term health benefits and are mostly reusable and recyclable. A high majority of the sample are not quite certain about the package being eco-friendly. The Weighted Mean when calculated for the various opinions showed that green products being safe to use ranks first among all the opinions, next is the long term health benefits offered by green products, followed by respondents agreeing that green products are made with natural ingredients, green products being recyclable and environmental friendly comes next in the ranking and the last favorable opinion is the eco-friendly packaging of

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green products. Respondents opined that products are *green* but not sure about the *greenness* in packaging.

Table 4: Purchase behavior of consumers towards green products

Variable		Number	%
Are Green Products over-priced	YES	97	60.63
	NO	41	25.63
	Not sure	22	13.75
Willing to pay extra for green products	Yes for all products	26	16.25
	For certain products only	78	48.75
	Maybe	39	24.38
	Not at all	17	10.63
Reason for willing to pay more	Health concerns/ Quality Of Life	138	86.3
	Environmental Concerns	112	70
	Green products stand for quality	134	83.8
	Status Benefits	25	15.6

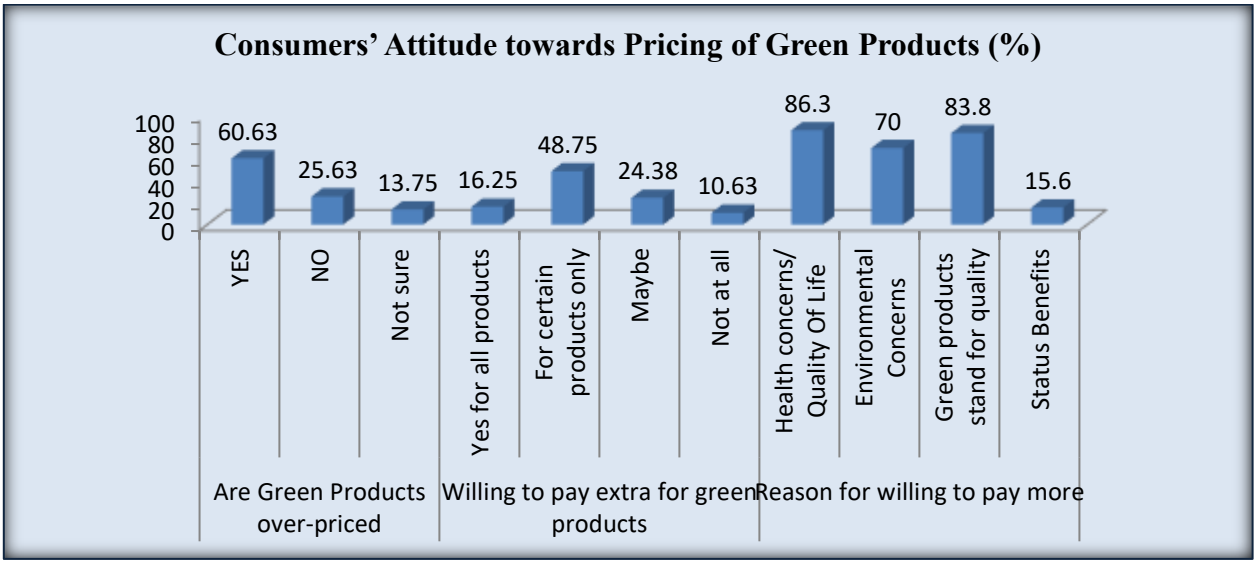


Fig. 3: Consumers' Perception about Pricing of Green Products

From the above table it can be inferred that consumers find green products costly (61%) ; 49% of respondents are willing to pay the more for certain products and 16% are not price sensitive, they overlook the price factor when making purchases. 10% of the respondents are not ready to buy because of high price. Health concerns and quality of life makes 86% of the respondents preferring green products in certain categories even at a high price. 84% of the respondents equate green products to quality and as quality comes with a price, they are willing to pay more. A high percentage (70%) of the respondents are deeply influenced by the eco-friendly aspect of green products and are willing to pay more .The purchase of green products is perceived to enhance status of consumers and 16% of the sample is willing to bear extra cost for this reason.

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Table 5: Consumers' Perception towards Pricing of Green Products

Level of efforts to purchase green products	For certain products	For all/any products
I purchase green products only if it is available near my place	5%	95%
I would travel the extra mile to purchase green products	84.40%	15.60%
I only purchase green products if I am convinced with the seller and brand name	88.75%	11.25%
Concerns when purchasing green products	**Num**	**%**
Only product concerns me	87	54.38
Only package concerns me	0	0.00
Both product and package concerns me	61	38.13
Product, package and promotion concerns me	12	7.5
Shopping Preferences	**Num**	**%**
Shop Offline Only	59	36.88
Shop Online Only	9	5.63
Either Offline Or Online	92	57.50

The convenience and availability factor also influence purchase behavior. 95% of the respondents look for the availability of green products near to their place. 84% would travel the extra mile to purchase certain green products. 89% of the respondents will purchase green products only after being convinced about it that is the genuineness of the seller and the brand. They are not going to be deceived by dubious claims of greenness. 54% of the respondents are concerned only with the product being *green*; only package being eco-friendly is not sought. 38% of the respondents are concerned about not only product but also the package being eco-friendly. 7.5% look for eco-friendly aspect in product, package and promotional means. 57% of the respondents are not very particular on the mode of purchase. They are fine with both online and offline modes whereas 36% would like to purchase green products only offline.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to explore the consumer awareness and purchase attitude towards green products in Kodagu District of Karnataka. Green Products are beneficial for health and environment and it has been proved beyond doubt. Consumers are aware of the existence of green products but their definition and understanding of *greenness* differs. It is through media advertisements that they get to know about it. Concern for health and environment are utmost for the purchase of green products by the respondents in the survey. The cost factor is one that deters them as also the trust in the claims made regarding the authenticity of green products. This requires authorized certification and standardization and green labeling. Also promotion of green products has to be concentrated on. Companies should focus on product positioning for green products. Marketers should educate consumers about the features of green products and make it more affordable. Overall the study observed favorable perception of consumers towards green products.

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