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CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND PREFERENCE TOWARDS GREEN MARKETING: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT
This research investigates consumer perception and preference towards green marketing initiatives. With rising environmental concerns and awareness of climate change, green marketing has become a strategic tool for organizations. The study examines how consumers understand, respond to, and prefer eco-friendly marketing tactics and whether these influence purchasing decisions. A mixed-method approach involving surveys and interviews with 300 participants was used. The results suggest that while environmental concern is high among consumers, a gap remains between awareness and actual purchasing behavior. Price, trust in green claims, and product availability are key influencing factors. The study highlights the need for transparent, affordable, and accessible green products to enhance consumer trust and drive sustainable consumption.

KEYWORDS: *Green Marketing, Consumer Perception, Sustainable Consumption, Eco-Friendly Products, Environmental Awareness*

1. INTRODUCTION
Environmental sustainability has gained global significance in recent years, influencing corporate practices and consumer behavior. Green marketing refers to the marketing of products that are environmentally safe. Companies adopt green strategies not only to fulfill corporate social responsibility but also to meet changing consumer expectations. This research seeks to understand how consumers perceive green marketing and to what extent it influences their buying preferences.

Objectives of the Study
1. To understand consumer awareness regarding green marketing.
2. To analyze consumer preferences for green products.
3. To identify the factors influencing green purchase behavior.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
Green Marketing Definition
According to Polonsky (1994), green marketing involves all activities designed to generate and facilitate exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment.

Consumer Attitude and Behavior
Ottman (1998) suggests that consumers are more likely to purchase green products if they perceive personal benefit along with environmental benefit. However, a study by Peattie and Crane (2005) argues that green consumerism often faces skepticism due to greenwashing and lack of standardization.

Perception vs. Reality
Research by Gleim et al. (2013) highlights a notable "attitude-behavior gap" where consumers express positive attitudes towards sustainability but fail to act accordingly due to convenience, price, or availability constraints.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Research Design
A descriptive research design was employed.

Sample Size
300 respondents across urban areas in Coimbatore were selected using stratified random sampling.

Data Collection Tools
- **Primary Data:** Structured questionnaire (Likert-scale based) and in-depth interviews.
- **Secondary Data:** Journals, books, company reports, and online articles.

Data Analysis
Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative responses were coded for thematic analysis.

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4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Awareness of Green Marketing:

- 82% of respondents were aware of eco-friendly labels such as "organic," "biodegradable," and "carbon neutral."
- Only 54% could accurately define green marketing.

Purchase Behavior

- 68% preferred green products but only 39% regularly purchased them.
- 57% cited high prices as a deterrent.
- 45% doubted the authenticity of green claims.

Influencing Factors

- Top influencing factors included:
  - Trust in product (72%)
  - Affordability (65%)
  - Brand reputation (60%)
  - Peer influence and social media (50%)

5. DISCUSSION

The study reveals that while consumers express high levels of environmental concern, actual green purchase behavior remains moderate. This behavior is moderated by trust issues, price sensitivity, and limited availability. Green marketing campaigns are more effective when they emphasize product credibility and personal benefits alongside environmental impact. The perception of green washing undermines consumer confidence, highlighting the need for regulatory oversight and transparent labeling.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Green marketing holds potential to transform consumer behavior toward sustainability, but companies must bridge the gap between awareness and action. Educational campaigns, affordable green alternatives, and credible certifications can enhance consumer trust and preference.

Recommendations

1. Companies should ensure transparency in green claims.
2. Introduce incentives or loyalty programs for green purchases.
3. Collaborate with third-party certifiers to build trust.
4. Increase availability and visibility of green products across retail channels.

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