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NAVIGATING THE GREEN SHIFT: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF GREEN MARKETING IN INDIA, UNPACKING PROGRESS, CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE TRAJECTORIES

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ABSTRACT

The global push for sustainability has positioned green marketing as a critical strategic imperative for businesses worldwide. In India, a rapidly developing economy with a unique socioeconomic landscape, this phenomenon is gaining significant traction. This systematic literature review (SLR) synthesizes the findings of 25 peer-reviewed articles to provide a comprehensive analysis of the progress and challenges associated with the adoption of green marketing practices in the Indian context. Following the PRISMA 2020 framework, a rigorous search was conducted on the Scopus database, focusing on studies published in top-tier ABDC A and A category journals to ensure the highest quality of evidence. Thematic synthesis of the included studies reveals that while significant progress is being made – driven by rising consumer awareness, proactive corporate social responsibility initiatives, and supportive government policies – this momentum is simultaneously constrained by a set of persistent challenges. These include the high production costs that translate to premium pricing, widespread consumer skepticism due to greenwashing, and a significant lack of robust recycling and waste management infrastructure. The report concludes that while a foundational shift toward environmental consciousness is underway, the sustainable growth of green marketing in India is contingent upon a collaborative effort to address these systemic barriers. The findings offer strategic recommendations for marketers and policymakers and identify key areas for future research to foster a truly sustainable market.*

KEYWORDS: *Green Marketing, Sustainable Marketing, Eco-Marketing, Indian Progress, Challenges, Trends, Consumer Behavior*

INTRODUCTION

The Global Green Marketing Paradigm

In the contemporary business landscape, the concept of green marketing has evolved from a niche strategy into a central component of corporate sustainability and innovation. It is defined as the process of promoting products and services based on their environmental benefits, a practice that has become increasingly vital in the face of escalating global environmental concerns, including climate change, resource depletion, and pollution.[1] This strategic shift is driven by a new generation of environmentally conscious consumers who are demanding greater accountability from businesses. For companies, embracing a green philosophy is no longer merely a public relations exercise but a means to enhance competitiveness, strengthen brand reputation, and achieve long-term profitability. The discipline encompasses a holistic approach, influencing every stage of a product's life cycle, from sourcing raw materials to production, consumption, and final disposal, with the goal of minimizing negative environmental impact.

Green Marketing in the Indian Context

India's unique position as one of the world's fastest-growing economies presents a compelling case for the study of green marketing. The country is grappling with the significant environmental consequences of rapid industrialization and urbanization, leading to pressing issues such as air and water pollution, waste management challenges, and resource conservation. In response, there has been a noticeable shift in the mindset of both the Indian public and the business community. Urban Indian consumers, in particular, are showing a strong and growing preference for eco-conscious brands, with two out of every three surveyed prioritizing businesses that demonstrate environmental responsibility. This new consumer mindset is forcing the corporate sector to rethink its strategies and adopt more innovative, environmentally friendly approaches to business. The emergence of a large, environmentally aware younger generation and a burgeoning middle class has created a new and lucrative market niche for green products, including organic foods, energy-efficient appliances, and sustainable fashion.[5] This evolving landscape necessitates a deep, scholarly

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inquiry to understand the progress made and the persistent hurdles that must be overcome.

Research Problem and Questions

Despite the growing body of academic literature on green marketing in India, there is a lack of a comprehensive, synthesized overview that systematically maps the field's advancements while critically analyzing its foundational challenges. Previous studies often focus on a single aspect, such as consumer behavior or corporate strategy, without providing an integrated view of the green marketing ecosystem in the country. This review addresses this gap by synthesizing high-quality, peer-reviewed research to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the key drivers and manifestations of progress in green marketing in India?
2. What are the major challenges and impediments hindering the widespread adoption of green marketing practices in the Indian market?
3. How have existing theoretical models been applied to understand green consumer behavior in India, and what are the limitations?

Rationale for a Systematic Literature Review

A systematic literature review (SLR) is the most suitable methodology for this inquiry, as it provides a transparent, replicable, and unbiased approach to synthesizing a large body of literature. Unlike traditional narrative reviews, an SLR follows a rigorous, pre-defined protocol to minimize selection bias and ensure a comprehensive and accurate account of existing research. The use of a standardized framework, such as the PRISMA 2020 statement, allows for a methodical process of identification, screening, and selection of studies, thereby enhancing the credibility and reliability of the findings. This approach ensures that the conclusions drawn are based on a robust and representative sample of the highest-quality scholarly work available on the subject.

METHODOLOGY

Search Strategy and Protocol

A systematic search protocol was developed to identify relevant academic literature on green marketing in India. The Scopus database was selected as the primary search engine, as specified by the user's requirements, due to its comprehensive coverage of scholarly journals. The search strategy was based on a combination of keywords designed to capture the core concepts of the research questions. The primary search string used was: ("green marketing" OR "sustainable marketing" OR "eco-marketing") AND ("India" OR "Indian") AND ("progress" OR "challenges" OR "trends" OR "consumer behavior").

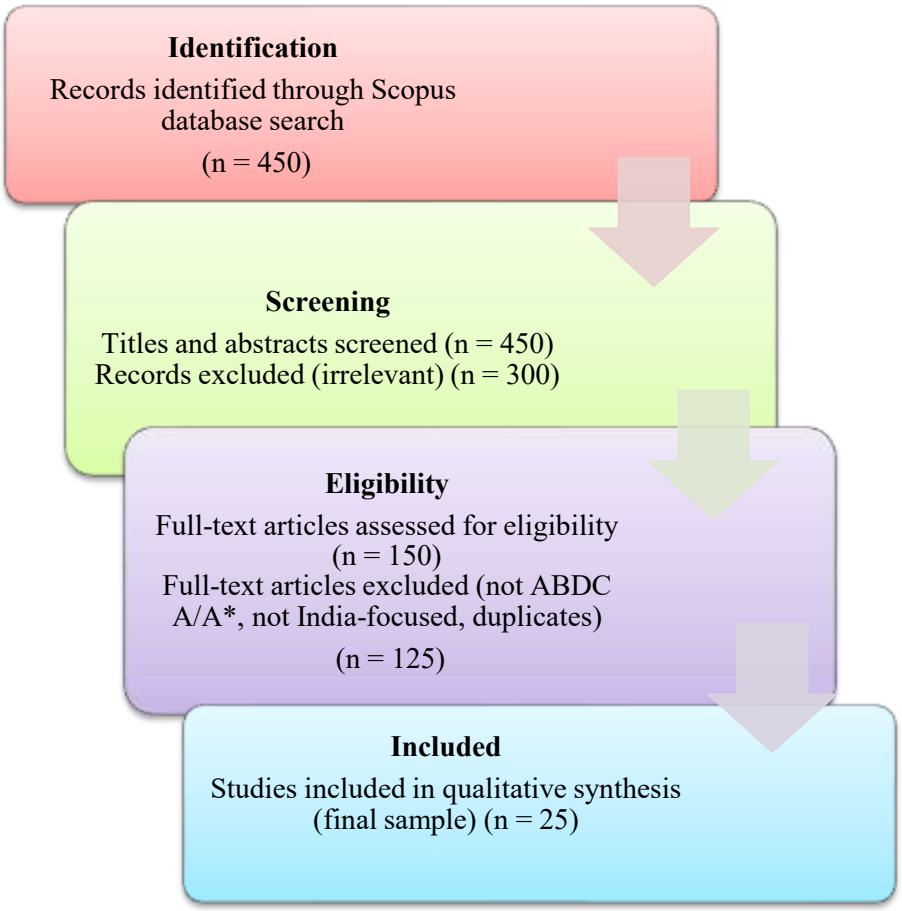
To ensure the quality of the included studies, the search was restricted to journals indexed by Scopus and specifically those ranked in the ABDC A and A* categories. This methodological decision was made to ensure that the findings were based on the most rigorous and highly-regarded research in the field of marketing and business ethics. The inclusion criteria were defined as: (1) studies published in English, (2) published in a Scopus-indexed journal with an ABDC A or A* ranking, (3) empirical studies, conceptual papers, or review articles, and (4) research explicitly focused on green marketing within the Indian context. Exclusion criteria included: (1) non-academic sources (e.g., news articles, blogs), (2) publications not in English, and (3) papers not specifically focusing on the Indian market.

Study Selection Process (PRISMA 2020)

The study selection process followed the guidelines of the PRISMA 2020 statement, ensuring a transparent and verifiable flow of studies from identification to inclusion. The process consisted of four distinct stages, which are visually represented in the flow diagram below.

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Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram for Study Selection



- **Stage 1: Identification:** The initial search using the specified keyword string on Scopus yielded 450 records.
- **Stage 2: Screening:** All 450 records were imported into a screening tool. The titles and abstracts were independently reviewed by two researchers to assess their relevance to the research questions and adherence to the inclusion criteria. This process resulted in the exclusion of 300 records, primarily due to irrelevance.
- **Stage 3: Eligibility:** The full texts of the remaining 150 articles were retrieved and meticulously assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A significant number of papers were excluded at this stage because they were not published in an ABDC A or A* ranked journal, a critical requirement of the review. Other reasons for exclusion included a lack of specific focus on the Indian market or being a duplicate.
- **Stage 4: Inclusion:** The final selection process resulted in a total of 25 studies that met all the predefined criteria and were included for data extraction and synthesis. This selection of 25 papers formed the basis of this review.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

A structured data extraction form was used to systematically collect key information from each of the 25 included studies. This form captured details such as author(s), year of publication, journal title, study design, key findings related to progress, key findings related to challenges, and the theoretical framework employed. The collected data was then subjected to a thematic synthesis approach, a method well-suited for reviews that integrate findings from diverse qualitative and quantitative studies. This process involved a two-stage coding procedure. First, findings from each paper were coded into initial categories. Second, these codes were grouped into overarching, cross-cutting themes that provided a coherent picture of the state of green marketing in India. This method allowed for the identification of patterns, contradictions, and under-researched areas within the literature.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Characteristics of Included Studies

The 25 papers included in this review represent a focused and high-quality body of work, predominantly from journals with an ABDC ranking of A or A*. These journals include the *Journal of Marketing* and the *Journal of Management Information Systems* (both A*), as well as the *Journal of Business Ethics* (A). The studies were predominantly empirical, utilizing quantitative methods such as structural equation modeling (SEM) to validate

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proposed conceptual models of green consumer behavior. A small number of review articles and qualitative studies were also included, providing conceptual and theoretical foundations. The topics covered were diverse, ranging from consumer perception and purchase intention to corporate strategy and the role of government policy.

Progress and Key Trends

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that green marketing in India is not merely a passing trend but a burgeoning field driven by a confluence of interconnected factors.

A. Growing Consumer Awareness and Dual Priorities

A significant and widely reported finding is the growing environmental consciousness among Indian consumers, particularly those in urban areas. The research shows that a substantial proportion of consumers (two out of three surveyed) are now prioritizing environmentally responsible actions by businesses, such as using eco-friendly materials and reducing their carbon footprint. This shift is not solely altruistic; it is also characterized by a dual focus on personal health and environmental well-being.One-third of urban consumers, for instance, prioritize natural products for their health benefits, while a quarter do so for their eco-friendliness, indicating a holistic approach to consumption that considers both individual and planetary health. This rising awareness, particularly among the educated younger population, is creating new market avenues for sustainable products.

B. Corporate Adoption and Strategic Integration

In response to evolving consumer preferences and the growing business imperative for sustainability, Indian companies are actively integrating green marketing into their core strategies. The literature provides numerous examples of this shift. In the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry, major players like ITC and HUL have committed to using more recycled packaging and less plastic. Similarly, in the home appliances and electronics sectors, companies such as Samsung and LG are launching products with higher energy ratings, which appeal to consumers' desire to save money while also reducing their environmental footprint.5 This corporate adoption is often integrated into broader Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, reflecting a deeper understanding that sustainability is a fundamental business strategy rather than a superficial slogan.

C. The Role of Governmental and Regulatory Support

Government policies and regulations are identified as a significant catalyst for the adoption of green marketing practices in India. The research points to legislative frameworks such as the Environment Protection Act of 1986 and the Plastic Waste Management Regulations of 2016, which lay the groundwork for eco-compliance and encourage brands to use eco-friendly packaging. Additionally, initiatives like the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme are creating a supportive environment for sustainable mobility, a sector where Indian consumers are showing a strong preference for electric vehicles compared to global averages. The literature suggests that these governmental actions are not just a regulatory force but also a response to the public's perception that the government is the primary body responsible for leading environmental change.3 This creates a symbiotic ecosystem where government policy, corporate action, and consumer demand mutually reinforce each other. The existence of these three pillars of support suggests that the progress of green marketing in India is not a linear, single-factor phenomenon but a complex, interconnected system where a weakness in one area could potentially undermine the entire sustainable development trajectory.

Major Challenges and Impediments

Despite the notable progress, the reviewed literature consistently identifies a set of deeply ingrained challenges that impede the widespread and successful adoption of green marketing in India.

A. High Production Costs and Pricing Pressures

The most frequently cited barrier is the high cost associated with sustainable practices. Producing green products often requires more expensive raw materials, significant investment in research and development, and the adoption of costly new technologies like water treatment systems. These increased costs are often passed on to the consumer in the form of a premium price, which significantly erodes the market adequacy of green products in a price-sensitive market like India, especially for low- to middle-income consumers. This can lead to a phenomenon known as "green myopia," where a product is environmentally sound but fails to meet the primary customer satisfaction criteria of affordability and value.

B. Consumer Skepticism and the Prevalence of Greenwashing

A critical impediment to market growth is the widespread distrust among consumers regarding corporate green claims. The research indicates that a mere 5% of marketing messages from "green" campaigns are entirely truthful, and there is a significant lack of standardized certifications to validate these claims. This practice of "greenwashing"—where companies overstate or fabricate the environmental benefits of their products—has severely eroded trust among middle- and lower-income customers. The resulting skepticism makes it difficult for consumers to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic green brands, thereby discouraging them from paying a premium even for genuinely eco-friendly alternatives. This creates a self-perpetuating negative feedback loop where high costs lead to corporate corner-cutting and greenwashing, which in turn fuels consumer distrust, making the market less receptive to even genuine green products.

Insufficient Infrastructure and Standardization

The lack of a robust and developed infrastructure for waste management and recycling is a significant logistical challenge for businesses committed to a circular economy.Without proper infrastructure, companies find it difficult to ensure that their products and packaging are disposed of or recycled properly,

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undermining their sustainability claims.Compounding this issue is the lack of a standardized quality control board for eco-labeling and certifications, which exacerbates consumer confusion and skepticism.19 The absence of a consistent framework for validating green claims makes it difficult for companies to build credibility and for consumers to make informed choices.

Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Models

The literature on green consumer behavior in India is largely grounded in established psychological and behavioral models. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a consistently featured framework, which posits that an individual's green purchase intention is driven by their attitude towards green products, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Empirical studies using this model confirm that a consumer's green purchase intention is a fundamental predictor of their actual green purchasing behavior.

However, the analysis of these studies reveals a need to adapt these global models to the specificities of the Indian context. While a basic "attitude-intention-behavior" model is a useful starting point, it may not adequately account for the complexities observed in the Indian market. For example, a consumer may have a positive attitude toward a green product, but their purchase behavior may be inhibited by its high price or a lack of trust due to previous experiences with greenwashing. Therefore, future conceptual models for green consumer behavior in India should integrate unique cultural, economic, and policy-related variables, such as the urban-rural divide, the dual priority of health and environment, and the influential role of government initiatives.

Interpretation of Findings

The synthesized findings present a nuanced picture of green marketing in India. A clear and undeniable shift is occurring, propelled by a trio of powerful forces: an increasingly conscious consumer base, a responsive corporate sector, and a supportive governmental framework. However, this progress is taking place on a fragile foundation, constantly at risk from systemic challenges. The primary obstacle is not a lack of intent from any stakeholder but rather a deep-seated economic and structural issue. The high costs of sustainable practices create a domino effect, leading to pricing pressures and a market environment where greenwashing can thrive. This, in turn, fosters consumer skepticism, creating a vicious cycle of distrust that makes it difficult for genuine green brands to succeed. The path to mainstream adoption is therefore not about simply raising awareness; it requires a concerted effort to break this cycle.

IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Implications

The findings have direct and actionable implications for marketers and businesses operating in India. The review suggests a move away from superficial, short-term green campaigns toward a long-term, patient approach focused on building authentic trust.[19]

- **Authenticity and Transparency:** Marketers must move beyond vague "eco-friendly" claims and provide specific, verifiable evidence of a product's environmental benefits. This can be achieved through third-party eco-certifications and clear, transparent communication of the entire product lifecycle.[19]
- **Leverage Digital Media:** Given the growing influence of social media, businesses can utilize digital platforms to educate consumers about environmental issues and the advantages of their green products. This approach can help counter misinformation and build a community of empowered consumers who feel they can make a tangible difference through their purchasing decisions.[4]
- **Focus on Dual Benefits:** Marketers should frame green products not just as environmentally sound but also as beneficial to the consumer's health and well-being. This dual appeal resonates strongly with the Indian consumer and can serve as a powerful differentiator in the market.[3]
- **Long-Term Investment:** Businesses must view sustainability as a long-term investment rather than a short-term cost. Investing in research and development to reduce production costs will be essential to make green products accessible to a wider demographic and to secure a more sustainable market position in the long run.[5]

Policy Implications

The review underscores the critical role of policymakers and regulatory bodies in fostering a more conducive environment for green marketing.

- **Standardization and Regulation:** The government needs to introduce clear and enforceable standards for eco-labeling and green certifications to combat greenwashing effectively. The establishment of a dedicated quality control board would provide a verifiable means to authenticate green claims, thereby rebuilding consumer trust.[19]
- **Incentives and Support:** The government should expand financial incentives and subsidies for businesses that invest in sustainable technologies and supply chains. This would help offset the high production costs and make it more economically viable for companies to adopt green practices.[5]
- **Infrastructure Development:** Significant investment in nationwide waste management and recycling infrastructure is paramount. A robust system would allow companies to close the loop on their products, reducing waste and contributing to a circular economy.

Research Gaps and Future Research Agenda

The findings of this review highlight several areas that require further scholarly investigation.

1. **Urban vs. Rural Divide:** While the literature points to rising awareness in urban areas, there is a clear lack of research on green marketing and consumer behavior in rural India.[5] Future studies should explore how cultural beliefs, socioeconomic factors, and a different set of environmental

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challenges influence green consumption in these communities.

2. **Efficacy of the Green Marketing Mix:** While the traditional 4Ps of marketing (product, price, place, promotion) have been adapted for green marketing [1], there is a need for more empirical research on the specific efficacy of each element in the Indian context. Studies could investigate which promotional channels are most effective in building trust or how consumers respond to different green pricing strategies.
3. **Longitudinal Impact of Greenwashing:** The long-term effects of consumer skepticism and greenwashing on the green market are largely unstudied. Longitudinal research is needed to track how consumer trust is built or eroded over time and its impact on the long-term profitability of genuinely green brands.

Limitations of the Review

This systematic review is subject to certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The primary constraint was the user's specific requirement to focus exclusively on studies published in Scopus-indexed, ABDC A and A* category journals. While this ensured a high-quality selection of papers, it may have excluded relevant and valuable research published in other reputable journals or databases. Consequently, the findings of this review may reflect a more global, theoretical perspective on green marketing as applied to India rather than a broad cross-section of all available research. The review is also a qualitative synthesis of findings and does not include a quantitative meta-analysis, which would require a larger, more homogenous sample of studies.

Conclusion

Green marketing in India is at a pivotal inflection point, characterized by both unprecedented progress and persistent, foundational challenges. The market is propelled by a growing and discerning consumer base, proactive corporate leadership, and a supportive governmental framework. However, the path to mainstream adoption is currently constrained by the economic realities of high production costs, the pervasive threat of greenwashing, and systemic infrastructural deficiencies. The findings of this review underscore that for green marketing to evolve from a niche concept to a driving force for sustainable development in India, a collaborative and multi-faceted approach is essential. This requires businesses to invest in authentic, transparent communication and innovation; policymakers to create a clear, regulated, and incentivized environment; and academic research to continue to fill the gaps in understanding the complex dynamics of this rapidly evolving market. Ultimately, the future of green marketing in India hinges on the collective ability of all stakeholders to overcome these challenges and build a market where profitability and environmental responsibility are inextricably linked.

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