CUSTOMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS GREEN MARKETING-A STUDY IN NAMAKKAL DISTRICT

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Abstract
Environmental protection is the major concern for both the people and the government for the past decades. The first wave of green marketing happened in the 1980s. The tangible momentous for the first wave of green marketing came in the form of published books, both of which were called Green Marketing. The Indian customers have become environmentally more conscious over the last two decades. The development of customer perception about the products with their origin and an international environmental awareness has given the marketer an opportunity to facilities the customers about the green product. In this occasion, this study aimed to analyse customer perception towards green marketing in Namakkal district. The researcher has implemented convenience sampling technique to select the sample size of 115 customers who using green products in the study area. This study has utilized both primary and secondary data sources. For collecting the opinion of the customers about perception towards green marketing, a self-administered questionnaire has been developed and spread among population. The collected sample data were formed into tabulation and charts by using MS-Excel software. The statistical analysis of this study had been completed by using the tools such as simple percentage analysis, mean score analysis, Anova test and Pearson Correlation technique. This study revealed that all the customers are not having equal level of perception towards green marketing with regard to their age, educational qualification and living area. So, government should make various policies to promote green marketing and the marketers should create more awareness among people about the essential of green marketing.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Consumer Perception, Eco-friendly Products and Environmental Protection.

1. Introduction To Green Marketing

The term Environmental Marketing which known as Green Marketing came into prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It began in Europe when specific products were identified as being harmful to the earth's atmosphere. As a consequence, new "green" products which have less damaging to the environment were introduced. Green Marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs, such that satisfaction of these needs and wants occur, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment. It is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. The consumer behaviour on green products has the perception and knowledge of environment friendliness to make criteria of a product to be purchased. The knowledge on green products has a positive effect on purchasing behaviour and those who have more knowledgeable on environmental issues have more intentions to act in favour of the environment when purchasing a product. The increasing awareness of environment has initiated the consumers concern about the environmental protection and created great demand for green products. This results most of the concerns begun to develop strategies on green products to preserve the environment and satisfying consumers' preferences on green products. The environmental perception

includes the knowledge about the environment, environmental impacts and collective responsibility of sustainable development to differentiate knowledge about facts and knowledge about actions.

2.   Review of Literature

In view of Dharmalingam and Palanisamy (2019) statistically confirmed that level of age, education and income had significantly influenced the perception on green products. Also, consumers had positive impact on green products. This study proved that the selected consumers who having higher levels of income and education had more knowledge of environmental issues and green products. The authors Lavanya and Madhan Kumar (2019) inferred that the consumers were quite concerned regarding environmental protection. In addition, their overall attitude towards green products was actually positive and they really required to protect the present and future state of affairs as far as ecological sustainability was concerned. They obtained that most of the consumers were aware of green products and the organizations marketing the same. The study of Subatra (2020) stated that most of the respondents gave priority to their healthy life as the first rank for the customer satisfaction level about green products. Moreover, this study determined that a person who had some concern for the environment would have a stronger preference in purchasing a green product. The researchers Ashok and Aswathanarayana (2018) identified that there was no much difference with respect to awareness and perception towards eco-friendly product between the different age group respondents. Further, most of the respondents were aware about the eco-friendly products existing in the market. In case of Mayank Singhal et al. (2018) indicated that there was significant relationship between green marketing & Unant Jyoti LED (Ujala) Scheme which had a significant relationship. This study had observed that the customers had positive perception towards Unnat Jyoti LED Scheme. From the result of Pooja Jain and Praveen Mehta (2019) found that the perception of utility differed significantly in male and female customers. Also, there was a significant difference between the perceptions of the male and female consumers regarding utility of green products and there was significant difference between male and female customers perception with respect to environment friendliness of green products. Moreover, there was a significant difference in the perception of male and female customers with respect to perception of green products as healthy products.

3.   Statement of The Problem

Green products have the global concern for the past few years and now it will become important concern for the safeguarding the environment. Customers are increasingly conscious on the benefits and sustainable practices; the environment issues that are faced in their daily living that give more cause for concern. Customers are increasingly becoming aware of what goes into a product and prefer to buy goods that use raw material that are not harmful to the environment in Namakkal district. Consumer awareness is highly significant for the environment when purchasing the green products instead of regular products. Hence, this study aimed to analyze the consumer perception towards green marketing in Namakkal district.

4.   Objectives of the Study

Based on the discussion, the following objectives have been framed for study purpose.
- To study the demographic profile of the selected customers in Namakkal district.
- To find the factors that influence the green marketing in the study area.
- How the factors are directly or indirectly affects the perception of green marketing?

5. Hypothesis of The Study

H$_0$: There is no significant mean difference in perception of the customers towards green marketing with regard to various categories of the selected independent variables like age, gender, educational qualification, marital status, living area and period of using the green products.

6. Research Design and Technique

For examining the study objectives, the researcher has selected descriptive research design. A self-administered questionnaire has been developed which consisted of demographic profile of the selected sample customers and their perception towards green marketing. The understanding of the customers has been collected through the developed questionnaire in Namakkal district by using convenience sampling technique. The researcher has selected the sample size of 115 customers who using green products in the study area. The collected sample data were subdued into tables and graphs with the help of MS-Excel software. In addition, the statistical tools such as Percentage analysis, Mean score analysis, Anova analysis and Pearson correlation analysis have been performed for analysis purpose and testing the null hypotheses developed by means of SPSS 20.0 software.

7. Results and Discussion

This section has consisted two heads for the ease of analysis and shows the objectives of this research. In the first head, the researcher has focused about the demographic profile of the customers of green marketing included the variables namely age, gender, educational qualification, marital status, living area and period of using green products. Also, the second head contains that the customer perception toward green marketing whereas detailed about the factors influencing customer perception towards green marketing.

Table 1: Selected Independent Variables and Perception towards Green Marketing

S.No.	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage	Mean Score
	Age			
1	Less than 25 years	19	16.5	3.87
2	25-35 years	32	27.8	3.79
3	36-45 years	41	35.7	4.05
4	Above 45 years	23	20.0	3.41
	Total	**115**	**100.0**	
	Gender			
1	Male	67	58.3	3.84
2	Female	48	41.7	3.70
	Total	**115**	**100.0**	
	Educational Qualification			
1	No formal education	11	9.6	3.64
2	School level	49	42.6	3.45
3	College level	32	27.8	4.29
4	Professional	23	20.0	3.76
	Total	**115**	**100.0**	

	Marital status			
1	Married	87	75.7	3.89
2	Unmarried	28	24.3	3.73
	Total	**115**	**100.0**	
	Living area			
1	Urban	52	45.2	3.71
2	Rural	63	54.8	3.96
	Total	**115**	**100**	
	Period of Using			
1	Upto 3 years	25	21.7	3.56
2	4-5 years	52	45.2	3.81
3	Above 5 years	38	33.1	3.90
	Total	**115**	**100**	

From the analysis, it is showed that maximum of the green customers belong to 36-45 years of age category, male, educated school level, married, living in rural area and using green products for 4-5 years. In addition, the mean score analysis indicated that the customers are having maximum level of perception on green marketing who belong to age group of 36-45 years, male, qualified college level, married, living in rural and utilizing green products for above 5 years.

Customer Perception towards Green Marketing
In this head, researcher has discussed about the customer perception towards green marketing in the study area. For this goal, eight statements have been framed with 5 points Likert's scaling method for examining the customer perception towards green marketing. Among the eight categories of customer perception towards green marketing, the customers have opined that effective utilization of the green products with mean score of 3.92 followed by use products free of strong toxicity materials with the mean score of 3.87 and price of the green products is proportionate with their quality with mean score of 3.81.

Relationship of Perception towards Green Marketing with selected independent variables
   H_0 :   There is no significant mean difference in perception of the customers towards green marketing with regard to selected independent variables.

Table 2 : Relationship of Perception towards Green Marketing with Selected Independent Variables

Independent Variables	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Age					
Between Groups	5.980	3	1.993	8.719	0.000**
Within Groups	25.377	111	0.229		
Total	31.357	114			
Gender					
Between Groups	0.244	1	0.244	0.886	0.348[NS]
Within Groups	31.113	113	0.275		
Total	31.357	114			

Independent Variables	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Educational Qualification					
Between Groups	2.519	3	0.840	3.232	0.025*
Within Groups	28.838	111	0.260		
Total	31.357	114			
Marital Status					
Between Groups	0.600	1	0.600	2.204	0.140^{NS}
Within Groups	30.758	113	0.272		
Total	31.357	114			
Living Area					
Between Groups	2.228	1	2.228	8.643	0.003*
Within Groups	29.129	113	0.258		
Total	31.357	114			
Period of Using					
Between Groups	1.312	2	0.656	2.445	0.091^{NS}
Within Groups	30.045	112	0.268		
Total	31.357	114			

Note: * - Significant at 1% level; ** - Significant at 5% level; NS – Not Significant

From the above table, it is revealed that the null hypothesis is rejected for the variables namely age, educational qualification and living area. On the other hand, the null hypothesis is accepted for the variables like gender, marital status and period of using the green products. So, it is observed that all the customers are not having equal level of perception towards green marketing with regard to their age, educational qualification and living area. Further, the variables like gender, marital status and period of using the green products are having equal level of perception towards green marketing.

Degree of Relationship between Selected Variables and Perception towards Green Marketing (Correlation Analysis)
The result of the correlation analysis between the selected variables and dependent variable perception towards green marketing is shown in the following table.

Table 3 : Degree of Relationship between Selected Variables and Perception towards Green Marketing (Correlation Analysis)

No.	Independent variables	'r' value	'p' value
1.	Age	0.253	0.001*
2.	Educational Qualification	0.397	0.000*
3.	Period of Using	0.119	0.131^{NS}

Note: * - Significant at 1% level; NS – Not Significant.

It is confirmed from the analysis that among the four selected variables, three factors like age and educational qualification are having positive correlation with the customer perception towards green marketing. On the other hand, the variable period of using is not associated with the perception towards

green marketing in the study area. It is found that whenever age and educational qualification increases their perception towards green marketing also positively increases.

8.   Findings
- From the percentage analysis, it is observed that most of the green customers are belong to 36-45 years of age category, male, educated school level, married, living in rural area and using green products for 4-5 years.
- The mean score analysis inferred that the customers are having maximum level of perception on green marketing who belong to age group of 36-45 years, male, qualified college level, married, living in rural and utilizing green products for above 5 years.
- From the Anova test, it is obtained all the customers are not having equal level of perception towards green marketing with regard to their age, educational qualification and living area. Also, the variables namely gender, marital status and period of using the green products are having equal level of perception towards green marketing.
- It is proved from Correlation analysis that whenever age and educational qualification increases their perception towards green marketing also positively increases.

9.   Suggestions
- The study revealed that the customers are having maximum level of perception on green marketing who belong to age group of 36-45 years. Hence, the marketers need to make awareness about the concept and benefits of green marketing among customers by this most customers can enhance their highest perception.
- From the study, it is obtained that the customers who qualified college level have extreme level of perception on green marketing because they understood about the green products. So, the government should take necessary action to build awareness about the green marketing among youngers through including the essential of green marketing in school education.
- It could be observed from findings that high level of perception on green marketing is perceived by rural area customers. Therefore, the marketers should make the green products available to the urban area customers for consumption as customers have shown willingness to buy green products if it is available.
- Companies have to ensure the adoption of innovative manufacturing procedures in order to making new innovative products that are green as well as cost effective which will induce customers to buy.

10.   Conclusion
This study has focused that the customer perception towards green marketing in Namakkal district. People are now willing to utilize green products as environmental issues continue to affect human activities. Many companies have started using sustainable development framework which is known as green marketing and most of the organizations have acknowledged green products which are environmentally friendly. This study concluded that there is a significant difference in perception of green marketing with regard to age, educational qualification and living area. So, marketers should play their role to ensure that green products are of high quality, availability and competitively priced. Also, they need of designing the marketing communication campaigns promoting green products due to high green value among customers.

11. References

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