



Vol. 3, No. 2; Apr – Jun (2023)

## Quing: International Journal of Commerce and Management

Available at <https://qingpublications.com/journals/ijcm>



# Friendly Approach of Consumers Towards Use of Eco-Friendly Products in Chennai City



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### ARTICLE INFO

**Received:** 09-05-2023  
**Received in revised form:** 12-06-2023  
**Accepted:** 14-06-2023  
**Available online:** 30-06-2023

### Keywords:

Consumption Experience;  
Customer Inducement  
Strategies;  
Eco-Friendly Products;  
Environmental Marketing;  
Going Green;  
Green Consumers;  
Green Marketing.

### ABSTRACT

“Going Green” has become the modern mantra of all businesses today. The environmental issues such as global warming, depletion of ozone layer, acid rain, degradation of land and various other environmental issues have led to customers as well as marketers concern for natural and safe environment. This has resulted in the emergence of the new concept of Green Marketing/ Environmental Marketing in order to maintain ecological balance. However, the environmental improvements demand customers as well as marketers participation through changing of their attitude and behaviours towards environment. Purchase of eco-friendly products represents such decision to buy, consume and to recycle goods which are not used. Constant efforts are to be taken to induce customers towards purchase and use of such eco-friendly products/green products which are sustainable products designed to minimize the harmful effects on the environment. In this context, this research study has been conducted to understand the factors responsible for choosing eco-friendly products; to examine the consumption experience of the users; to identify the problems faced by the buyers/users with eco-friendly products and suggest measures to overcome it. The convenience sampling method was used to choose 120 participants for collecting primary data. The city of Chennai in Tamil Nadu has been chosen for the research. Researchers determined that environmental consciousness and positive attitudes should be instilled in customers from an early age. There is an immense need for the marketers to devise effective customer inducement strategies in order to develop a friendly approach of consumers towards the purchase and use of eco-friendly products. This can pave way for creating a superior experience of green consumers which in turn leads to loyalty, increased repeat purchase as well as spread of positive word of mouth communication. This study tries to provide insights in these related areas.

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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.54368/qijcm.3.2.0021>

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Over the last several decades, consumers have grown more conscious of social and ethical issues related to trade, consumption of energy, and animal welfare. As consumers become more aware of their social responsibilities, the worldwide market for green products has exploded. The concept that consumer preferences represent price and quality preferences, norms, values, and beliefs is at the core of a movement that is sometimes referred to as ethical consumerism or green consumption. The environment has emerged as a major concern in recent years. Environmental issues have been connected to individual consumption, which has lowered the problem to the level of the consumer. There has been a rise in customers' knowledge of environmental issues; consequently, some of these consumers have consciously begun to look for green/Eco-friendly products. Organisations have started to provide a broader range of green and environmentally friendly products to appease customers' increasing concern for the environment.

Eco-friendly products are “products that do not harm the environment whether in their production, use or disposal.” These goods contribute to environmental protection because they prevent or substantially reduce pollution. These products are growing in popularity due to their minimal environmental effect. Eco-friendly products may be created with new raw resources or from previously used ones. Green marketing strategies simplify identifying these products in stores, including using eco-labels, eco-brands, and environmental advertising. Startups have emerged to fulfil the demand for these environmentally friendly products.

### 1.1 Review of Literature

A study by [Shukla et al., \(1998\)](#) was carried out to investigate the consumers' perceptions of eco-friendly products, the qualities they look for in such items, the motivations behind their purchases of green goods, their actual shopping habits, and the price premium they were willing to pay. According to the results, just approximately a quarter of respondents were worried about environmental safety. At the same time, the rest were worried about their health and cost, which became a major issue when the willingness to pay a premium for environmentally friendly products was also considered. This survey found that consumers needed more knowledge of eco-friendly product brands.

A report written by [Dubey \(2007\)](#) has highlighted the significance of information about the environment on consumers' decision-making process. One hundred people in the Indian city of Bhopal participated in the study. The results demonstrated that participants shifted their behaviour to be more mindful of environmental consequences after learning about environmental assessments. It was shown that consumers were more attentive to environmental information.

[Rashid \(2009\)](#) examined the Malaysian populace's knowledge of eco-labels as a moderating factor in the relationship between environmental consciousness and the desire to buy green products. Participants in this research were drawn from the workforces of companies that have effectively implemented an environmental management system. Five hundred and twenty-six employees were randomly selected from various companies. The findings demonstrated that consumer awareness of the suitable eco-label for the product of interest significantly decreased the relationship between environmental awareness and the desire to buy. Those respondents with a favourable attitude toward protecting the environment are the most likely to be influenced by an eco-label presence while making purchase decisions.

[Khera \(2011\)](#) points out some of the famous eco-friendly products from that period, including bamboo furniture, ceramic containers for cold water, and bio-gas usage in villages. The research has

focused on a few Indian firms that have implemented environmentally friendly policies, demonstrating the dedication of Indian businesses to CSR and environmental protection.

## 1.2 Research Gap

There is no question that environmental concerns have influenced commercial practices. Companies are looking to environmental concerns as a potential driver of strategic shifts. Many businesses are adopting eco-friendly marketing methods to stay competitive in the face of mounting social and political constraints. As a result, "Green Marketing" or "Environmental Marketing" has emerged to encompass all efforts made to generate and facilitate any exchange designed to meet human needs or wants in a way that causes as minimal destruction to the natural environment as possible. However, adopting green marketing strategies rests on customers demonstrating a significant degree of environmental friendliness. Previous studies focused on customers' desire to buy green products but have not followed up on what happened afterward. This research aimed to find out why people purchase green products, how long they use them, how they feel about using them, and how much they know about the benefits of these products. In addition, this research outlines the challenges they encounter while using eco-friendly products and proposes solutions to these issues.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the factors responsible for purchase of Eco-friendly products;
2. To examine the consumption/usage experience of the consumers of Eco-friendly products;
3. To understand the problems faced by consumers with eco-friendly products and suggest measures to overcome it.

## 2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The city of Chennai in Tamil Nadu has been chosen for the research. One hundred twenty participants from various socioeconomic backgrounds and ages who are regular purchasers and users of eco-friendly products were recruited for this research. The sample was selected using the convenience sampling method. A structured questionnaire served as the basis for the data collection. Books, journals, magazines, and the internet were scoured for secondary data. For this study, a simple percentage analysis has been used.

## 3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

*Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents*

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	77	64.00
Female	43	36.00
Age		
Below 18 years	12	10.00
18-25 years	75	63.00
25-35 years	21	18.00
35-45 years	8	6.00
Above 45 years	4	3.00

Occupation		
Student	67	56.00
Salaried employee	19	16.00
business	18	15.00
Home maker	10	8.00
Others (retired)	6	5.00
Marital status		
Married	42	35.00
Unmarried	78	65.00
Family members		
1	7	6.00
2	8	7.00
3	18	15.00
4	60	50.00
Above 4	27	22.00

Source: Primary Data

Based on the research findings presented in Table 1, the largest proportion of participants (64%) identified as male. Similarly, the majority of respondents (63%) fell within the age range of 18 to 25 years. Furthermore, the study revealed that most participants (56%) were students, and a significant number (65%) were unmarried. Additionally, the majority of respondents (50%) reported having a family size of four members.

Table 2

*Respondents Opinion about the Purchase of Eco-Friendly Products*

	Frequency	Percentage
How to know about eco-friendly products		
Press media	22	18.00
Internet	25	21.00
Self-interest	40	33.00
Friends/relatives	25	20.00
Others (TV/Radio; Dealers)	8	8.00
Period of usage		
Less than 1 year	37	31.00
1-3yrs	61	51.00
3-5yrs	13	11.00
Above 5yrs	9	7.00
Awareness about merits of eco-friendly products		
Fully	68	57.00
Partially	52	43.00
Types of eco-friendly products purchased		
Organic Food	55	46.00
Organic clothing	24	20.00
Cosmetics/personal care products	28	23.00
Electrical appliances	13	11.00
Motive of purchase		
For Ethical Reasons	19	16.00
To Protect/save the Environment	34	28.00
Quality of Product	32	27.00
Concern for health	23	19.00
Trust Factor	7	6.00
Others (status symbol)	5	4.00

Source: Primary Data

Based on the analysis presented in Table 2, a significant portion of the participants (33%) indicated that their purchase of eco-friendly products was driven by self-interest. Moreover, the majority (51%) reported using such products for a duration of 1-3 years. Additionally, a considerable number of respondents (57%) demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the benefits of eco-friendly products. In terms of specific purchases, the study found that most participants (46%) had bought organic food. Furthermore, a notable percentage (28%) stated that their motivation for purchasing eco-friendly products was to safeguard and preserve the environment.

Table 3

*Problems Faced by Respondents with Eco-Friendly Products and Consumption/Usage Experience*

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Problems</b>		
Expensive/costly	39	33%
Not promoted properly	23	19%
Lack of confidence in product performance	32	27%
Lack of availability	7	5%
Ignorant about benefits	19	16%
<b>Consumption/Usage experience</b>		
Good	76	63%
No idea	15	13%
Bad	29	24%
<b>Patronage intentions</b>		
Yes	94	78%
No	9	8%
Don't know	17	14%
<b>Recommendation intentions</b>		
Yes	89	74%
No	31	26%

Source: Primary Data

Based on the research findings presented in Table 3, a significant proportion of respondents (33%) expressed the view that eco-friendly products are relatively pricey. However, the majority of participants (63%) reported having positive experiences with the consumption and usage of these products. Furthermore, a large percentage (78%) indicated their intention to make repeat purchases of eco-friendly items in the future. Additionally, a substantial majority (74%) expressed a willingness to recommend eco-friendly products to others, including friends, relatives, and neighbours.

#### 4.0 CUSTOMER INDUCEMENT STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE CONSUMPTION/USAGE EXPERIENCE

The following strategies can be used to induce customers to buy and enhance experience towards eco-friendly products.

1. The study suggests that it is important to instil environmental awareness and foster positive attitudes towards the environment in individuals from an early age, specifically during childhood. To achieve this, the formation of eco-clubs in schools and colleges is recommended as a means to promote environmental consciousness among the future generation.
2. Effective eco-friendly marketing campaign or environmental related activities by marketers can influence the customers to buy Eco-friendly products in future. If customers are more convinced, it can lead to customer loyalty and retention.

3. Price of eco-friendly should be more affordable to all segments of customers. This can induce customers to make repeat purchase and also recommend it to others.
4. Further, the marketing strategies should be integrated with green marketing strategies that fulfils individual needs and maximizes customer satisfaction. Regular feedback surveys can be conducted by marketers to know about changing preferences of the target market.
5. Huge investments can be made by marketers by adopting various promotional measures in order to enhance sales of eco-friendly products and build good reputation for company. Design advertisements focusing on eco-friendly image that will influence customer's purchase decision.
6. Finally, marketers must create and build better quality of eco-friendly products than conventional products in relation to performance, reliability and durability to create a competitive advantage.

### **5.0 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- The area of the data collected has been restricted to Chennai city only.
- The sample size is restricted to 120 respondents.
- This study is based on the data collected through questionnaire which may be inadequate to measure the true opinion of the customers towards Eco- Friendly products.
- The suggestions are based only on the findings of the present study.
- The study cannot be generalized to long time as perceptions change.

### **6.0 SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

- A comparative study can be conducted among green customers of two metropolitan cities to understand their perceptions, preferences towards eco-friendly products.
- To have a better understanding of green consumers future studies can include other dimensions that have been studied comparatively less in extant literature.
- A specific eco-friendly product can be taken considered for the study.
- The impact Eco-friendly services on green customers can also be studied.
- Studies based on various segments of the market can be identified to know about users preference/motive behind purchase of eco-friendly products/services.

### **7.0 CONCLUSION**

Earth is the only planet where human beings can exist. One can be earth friendly by using eco-friendly products. Today, with rise of green consumers who are more environment conscious, this study has been conducted to know the awareness as well as factors responsible to buy eco-friendly products by green consumers. The results of the study showed that the respondents of the study are aware about eco-friendly products and the respondents have been purchasing eco-friendly products between 1-3 years. It is interesting to note that the motive behind purchase of eco-friendly products has been to save/protect the environment against ill-effects and damage. Further, the study revealed that respondents of younger generation are more inclined towards purchase of eco-friendly products than middle-aged and older generation. Furthermore, the study found that users generally have

positive experiences when consuming eco-friendly products. However, the study emphasizes the need for ongoing efforts by marketers, government entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and society as a whole to increase awareness among these consumers, encouraging eco-friendly purchasing behaviour and further enhancing their consumption experiences. Such actions are crucial for preserving our planet, Earth, and creating a better environment in which to live.

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