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Assessment of Factors Affecting Decision Making of Consumers towards Buying and Consuming Green Products

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ABSTRACT

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The sustainability of life on earth is being threatened by the rapid depletion of the environment and natural resources. The environment is changing in a variety of ways as a result of climate change, global warming, and other severe calamities. The industrial sector is among the major economic sectors that have considerably damaged the environment. When consumers use goods and services like food, transportation, housing, and domestic goods like appliances, environmental repercussions are an unfavorable outcome. In this scenario, utilizing green products is crucial for consumers to protect the environment from deteriorating. In this reference, a study on assessment of factors affecting decision making of consumers towards buying and consuming green products was conducted. The study's objectives identified the restricting and encouraging factors of the consumers towards becoming green consumers and to know about the attitude of consumers that affects their decision making in consumption of green products.

Introduction

A number of environmental problems are currently plaguing the planet, and taken as a whole, they indicate an ecosystem change brought on by human activities and endanger our way of life. The ecology has suffered greatly as a result of the negligent conduct that industrialization and urbanization have brought about. Issues include severe climate change, ozone layer loss, resource exploitation (both renewable and non-renewable), loss of flora and

fauna, water shortages, and alarming increases in air, water, soil, and even noise pollution. For instance, the use of fuel and energy contributes to climate change, and food production in agriculture can result in eutrophication, or an excess of nutrients from fertilizers or sewage that causes an increase in the growth of plants in water bodies and the extinction of flora and fauna (Tobler, 2011). Extreme weather variations and climate occurrences have been documented since 1950, according to IPCC (2014). Humans have been impacted by some

of these, including a decrease in cold temperature extremes, an increase in hot temperature extremes, a rise in sea levels, and an increase in heavy precipitation across the board. The biosphere's stored carbon is most vulnerable to harming the atmosphere due to deteriorating ecologies, deforestation, and climate changes. Natural resources and the ecosystem are declining quickly. The earth's finite resources are essential since it is anticipated that they will soon run out.

One of the primary economic sectors that significantly affect the environment is the industrial. Sometimes both the raw materials used to make products and the finished commodities consumed pose a threat to the environment and to mankind. The production and provision of traditional goods and services have a significant negative influence on a number of environmental challenges. All of these issues are causing people to worry about environmental preservation and the development of sustainable practices. However, there are some businesses and brands that have made significant contributions to the adoption of environmentally friendly practices, and they richly deserve the recognition. Businesses like IKEA, Unilever, Panasonic, IBM, Adobe, Nike, H&M, and others have made great efforts to lessen their negative environmental effects. Similar to these businesses, all must embrace the idea of protecting the environment and implementing eco-friendly marketing strategies. Fortunately, interest in environmental sustainability has risen significantly in recent years among academics and businesses. The term "green consumerism" has emerged as a result of this predicament. Consumer desire for goods and services that were produced using environmentally friendly practises, such as recycling and resource conservation, is known as "green consumerism." (www.conserve-energy-future.com, 2020).

Significance of Green Consumerism

Green consumerism is a comprehensive and ethical management strategy that meets, recognizes,

satisfies, and foresees the needs of the stakeholders in upholding the environment's natural health without jeopardizing human health. The control of risk associated with inefficient industrial processes as well as the environmental and financial benefits of utility systems have all been reached through green consumerism. Stringent rules against emissions are put in place as a result of green consumerism advocacy and programs, cutting emissions from engines and motors and advancing clean-burning fuel sources. More environmentally friendly food manufacturing has become necessary as a result of green consumerism advocacy. As a result, consumers are progressively establishing a culture of purchasing more locally grown and organic foods, which are possibly healthier because they are not grown or produced using pesticides, antibiotics, hormones, or artificial chemical fertilizers. Therefore, a lot of companies has initiated the production of green products and formulated marketing strategies to meet the preferences of green consumers and to get long-term business profits (Dangelico and Vocalelli, 2010; Sana, 2020).

The main objectives of this study to elicit the factors affecting the decision making of consumers towards buying intention and consumption of green products and also to assess the attitude of consumers towards green products.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the Uttarakhand state, District Nainital. A sample of 120 consumers was selected at random, including 60 male and 60 female respondents. A structured questionnaire was developed in order to evaluate the multiple factors including personal, economic, social, and other factors that influence consumer's decisions to purchase and consume green products. A scale was developed for the consumers to assess their attitude towards green products. A five points Likert scale was used to standardize the scale. The scale was then presented to a group of four specialists from the fields of food and nutrition, human development and

family studies, and resource management and consumer sciences. Each statement was given an excellent, good, or poor rating by the experts. Additionally, they were entreated to examine the statement's language, relevance, and content. After consultation with the expert panel, the scale was updated to reflect the statements that received the ratings of exceptional and good. Statistical methods; frequency, percentage, and correlation were used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

Consumers play a crucial role in the ecosystem's ability to develop sustainably. Many problems, including climate change, ozone layer thinning, loss of flora and fauna, air, water, soil pollution, noise pollution, etc., are directly related to human actions (Vlek and Steg, 2007); as a result, they can be handled by altering the relevant behaviour. According to Sharma *et al.*, (2014), green consumerism is a concept that a consumer would adopt if their daily routine allowed them to satisfy their desires and requirements while doing very little to no harm to the environment. Consumers have been dubbed "Green Consumers" in recent years due to their increased interest in and propensity to buy environmentally friendly goods. According to the Cambridge Business English Dictionary (2014) "green consumer" is someone who prefers to purchase products that have been manufactured in a way that protects the environment. The findings and analysis of the information obtained from the respondent's survey regarding the current study are as follows:

Factors affecting Buying Preferences of the Respondents

Numerous elements, including social, economic, and personal ones, have a significant impact on how consumers behave when making purchases. Consumer purchasing behaviour may be influenced by factors such as lifestyle, economic situation, personality, self-image, and others. Consumption of green goods and services is an economic, physical,

and social activity that is influenced by a person's personality, circumstances, and psychology as well as by the location, customs, politics, and social structure of the society they live in Peattie (2010).

Table 1 depicts that 100 per cent of respondents thought the price of green products was the most important element influencing their purchasing decisions as the price of such products was comparatively high, followed by about 88.6 per cent respondents who thought the product itself was the most important element which affected their preferences for the product purchase. Only approximately 10 per cent of the respondents believed that promotions had an impact on their purchasing decisions and for a very few respondents it was place which affected their purchase of green product. A significant positive relationship was found between green purchasing behaviour and three factors: 'perception of the seriousness of environmental problems', 'perception of environmental responsibility' and 'concern for self-image in environmental behaviour' (Dagher and Itani, 2014). These three factors can be used to increase consumers' green purchasing behaviour.

Attitude of the Respondents towards Green Consumerism and Environmental Sustainability

Table 2 details the information on respondents' attitudes towards environment sustainability and green consumerism. According to the findings, 62.5 per cent of respondents of whom 35 per cent were men and 27.5 per cent were women strongly agreed that they preferred green products and were environmentally conscious. Consumers expressed the opinion that it would be preferable for them to purchase green goods, and they all decided to become green consumers and stop purchasing conventional goods. A total of 81 per cent of respondents of whom 39 per cent were men and 42 per cent were women strongly agreed that adopting green products would help them live more sustainably.

Joshi and Rahman (2015) in their study found that

consumer's environmental concern and products functional attributes emerged as the two major determinants of consumer green purchase behavior. According to the results, 62.50 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that they preferred green products to non-green ones, of which 35 per cent were men and 27.50 per cent were women. Few people couldn't decide. Only 10 per cent of respondents said they would buy green items even if the prices were high, while 60 per cent said they would buy green products at high prices. A massive 84 per cent of respondents said they firmly agreed and believed that using green products ensures a clean, pollution-free world.

Mittleman (2012) discovered that overall, the attitude towards sustainability appeared to be highly favourable in the multiple studies and found that all consumers were aware of the sustainability

challenges and agreed that it was crucial to leave a better planet for future generations. Consumers appreciate that businesses consider the challenges of sustainability and give consumers the choice of making green purchases. Although to a lesser extent, there is a favourable attitude towards buying eco-friendly products. A study by Bazaar voice found that although two-thirds of respondents recognized negative environmental impacts, higher prices (62%) and the general unavailability of sustainable and eco-friendly alternatives (42%) often stood in their way. Consumers today recognize that there is a major contribution of transport, food, housing and technology to their carbon footprint. Although Muresan *et al.*, (2021) in their study found that consumers' attitudes towards sustainable food behavior are mainly influenced by age and education level.

Table.1 Factors affecting Buying Preferences of the Respondent with regards to Green Purchase

Factors	Male	Female	Total
Product	49 (40.83%)	57 (47.50%)	106 (88.33%)
Price	60 (50%)	60 (50%)	120 (100%)
Place	5 (4.16%)	3 (2.50%)	8 (6.66%)
Promotion	2 (1.66%)	9 (7.55%)	11 (9.11%)

Table.2 Attitude of the Respondents towards Green Consumerism and Environmental Sustainability

Statements	Strongly Agree			Agree			Undecided			Disagree			Strongly Disagree		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
I consider myself eco-friendly as I favor green products.	42 (35%)	33 (27.5%)	75 (62.5%)	15 (12.5%)	25 (20.83%)	40 (33.33%)	3 (2.5%)	2 (1.66%)	5 (4.16%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
I want to be green consumer by using green products.	47 (39.16%)	50 (41.66%)	97 (80.83%)	12 (10%)	9 (7.5%)	21 (17.5%)	1 (0.83%)	1 (0.83%)	2 (1.66%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
I prefer green products over non-green products.	42 (35%)	33 (27.5%)	75 (62.5%)	15 (12.5%)	25 (20.83%)	40 (33.33%)	3 (2.5%)	2 (1.66%)	5 (4.16%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
I agree to buy green products in spite of their high price.	6 (5%)	6 (5%)	12 (10%)	36 (30%)	36 (30%)	72 (60%)	5 (4.16%)	4 (3.33%)	9 (7.5%)	9 (7.5%)	12 (10%)	21 (17.5%)	4 (3.33%)	2 (1.66%)	6 (5%)
I believe that use of green products ensures clean and pollution free environment.	50 (41.66%)	51 (42.5%)	101 (84.16%)	10 (8.33%)	9 (7.5%)	19 (15.83%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I think it is important to educate consumers about the relationship between green consumerism and environmental sustainability.	60 (50%)	60 (50%)	120 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

In recent years, consumers' perceptions of goods and services have changed a little. They strongly believe that it is essential to preserve the environment and human health from the negative effects of industrial pollutants and to operate responsibly in order to promote economic progress. Consumers want products and services that are produced with eco-friendly methods, like recycling and resource conservation. It is crucial to concentrate on this topic because the current rate of environmental degradation makes it necessary to establish a sustainable ecosystem. From this study it is apparent that the consumers have positive attitude towards becoming green consumers. One important aspect that affected the consumer's purchasing decisions was the cost of green products. The cost was the main obstacle preventing respondents from embracing green purchasing. Therefore, in order to elevate the rate of adoption of green consumerism, factors that are restricting consumers should be combated as it is necessary to ensure environmental sustainability. The government can also promote green attitudes of the people through social media and extend the profits of green products through diverse online channels.

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