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# A STUDY ON THE LEVEL OF CUSTOMER AWARENESS TOWARDS GREEN PRODUCTS IN THENI DISTRICT

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*ABSTRACT: As global awareness of climate change has grown, companies have changed their strategies to help protect the environment by reducing the negative climate impact of their products and services. They promote products that are both energy efficient and recyclable. The market has transformed due to environmental concerns, with the creation of a new market segment focused on environmentally friendly principles. Many companies are increasingly producing environmentally friendly products and consumers are showing an increased desire to buy them. The increase in pollution and environmental damage caused by traditional manufacturing methods has necessitated the marketing of green products. Due to government restrictions and changing customer preferences globally, the majority of Indian companies have started marketing themselves as green organizations. In a country like India, where the population is so large, every consumer has the potential to reduce negative impacts on the environment by changing their buying behaviour. On the other hand, increased customer awareness of the environmental sensitivity of things is an essential part of consumers' growing responsibility in terms of consumption. Companies' sustainability information is not always clear to consumers, and their claims are sometimes unreliable. Given the lack of information about green products, this is one of the key issues. Due to a lack of understanding of how to use eco-labels on products, consumers find it difficult to distinguish between nationally/internationally recognized eco-labels and self-reported false claims made by producers. Green products are generally expensive and little known to consumers. Customers may be skeptical of the company's green marketing strategy due to misleading advertising, misrepresentation, inaccurate labeling and inconsistent performance, all of which have contributed to consumer confusion. Many customers may not be willing to pay a higher price for environmentally friendly products, which reduce business revenue. In this context, the researchers tried to see to what extent customers knew about green products in Theni district. For the study, 750 customers were selected. Only customers who use green products are included in the sample. Primary data were collected from 750 customers using an interview schedule. Secondary data were mainly collected from journals, periodicals and books. To reach a meaningful conclusion, the data obtained for the study was edited, quantified, categorized and tabulated, and analyzed. Researchers have offered a number of suggestions for expanding the market for green products.*

*Keywords: Green marketing, green products, environmental sustainability, eco-friendly products.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations have changed their practices to help save the environment by reducing the negative climate impact of their products and services, as global awareness of climate change has grown. Consumers are aware of environmental issues such as global warming, natural resource depletion, and weather change. The government, through its environmental marketing regulations, is aiming to safeguard the environment while simultaneously attempting to



minimize the manufacture of harmful products. They are aiming to promote products that are both energy efficient and recyclable. As a result, environmental concerns have restructured the market, resulting in the creation of a new market segment based on ecologically friendly practices. Many organisations are now manufacturing ecologically friendly products, and consumers are more eager to purchase them. Consumption of goods and services has expanded dramatically over the previous decade, resulting in depletion of natural resources and serious environmental harm. This may influence one's behaviour, particularly when making a buying decision. As a result, customers expressed their concern for the environment by actively purchasing green products. Since the 1970s, greater environmental awareness has resulted in a beneficial shift in consumer behaviour toward ecologically friendly products.

### **1.1. Concept of Green Products**

There is no universally accepted definition of a green product. Green products are ones that have a lower environmental impact or are less harmful to human health. Green products, also known as eco-products, environmentally friendly products, or sustainable products, are made with less energy, are made from recycled materials, and are delivered to the market with less packaging. A green product is defined as one that makes use of recycled materials in its design or features, as well as one that lowers hazardous pollution and improves the environment. Green products have environmentally friendly material or packaging that helps to reduce the impact on the environment. Energy efficient, water efficient, low emission, safe and healthful, recyclable, durable, biodegradable, renewable, and reused products are all prevalent characteristics of products.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The environment has been a continuous public concern for the green movement as it continues to deteriorate. Natural resources such as air, timber, fossil fuels, ore, and water are used and harmed in the manufacturing, processing, and consumption of goods. The usage of commodities generates hazardous waste, which becomes a contaminant in the environment. The marketing of green products has become necessary due to rising pollution and environmental damage caused by traditional manufacturing processes. Due to government laws and a change in customer preferences around the world, the majority of enterprises in India have begun marketing themselves as green organisations. In a country with such a large population as India, every consumer has the power to reduce negative environmental impacts



by modifying their buying habits. Customers' understanding of environmental products, on the other hand, is a crucial role in developing customer responsibilities toward consumption. Furthermore, environmental issues are difficult to comprehend, which has deterred people from purchasing green products. Consumers may not understand the sustainability information provided by companies, or the statements made by companies may be untrustworthy. Given the lack of understanding about green products, this is one of the most significant issues. Consumers make it to distinguish between nationally/internationally recognized green labels and producers' false self-declared claims due to a lack of understanding of eco label usage for products. Green products are generally expensive and have a low level of consumer awareness. Though organisations have begun to adapt to environmental concerns by using green marketing techniques, the consumer must eventually collaborate in order for green marketing methods to be sustainable. The Indian consumer's attitude toward green products is likewise debatable. Customers may not believe in the firm's green marketing approach as a result of misleading advertisements, false claims, ambiguous labels, and inconsistent performance, which has caused consumer uncertainty. Many customers may be unwilling to pay a premium price for green products, affecting the company's sales. Therefore, convincing customers is a difficult task. Furthermore, implementing green marketing will not be a simple task. When it comes to green marketing, the company has a lot of issues to deal with. Green marketing necessitates a significant investment in terms of technology advancement, process modification, consumer communication, and so on. Green marketing will be initially costly. The company may be obliged to use unethical methods to decrease costs in order to stay competitive, rendering the entire concept of going green a farce. Further, profits will be modest because renewable and recyclable items, as well as green technologies, are more expensive. In this context, the researcher attempted to examine the level of customer awareness of green products in Theni district.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of the study is to find out how familiar customers in Theni district are with green products. Also, here are the specific objectives:

- a) To know the level of customer awareness of green products in Theni district.
- b) To find out the problems that customers have when purchasing green products in Theni district.



- c) To offer appropriate suggestions for expanding the scope of the green product market based on the findings of the study.

### **3.1. Testing of Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was developed and tested in order to determine the level of customer awareness of green products.  $H_{01}$ : Customers' socio-economic backgrounds will have no bearing on their level of awareness of green products.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

The present study is based on a survey method and is empirical in nature. The research is limited to the level of customer awareness of green products in Theni district. Theni district has five taluks namely Theni, Bodinayakanur, Periyakulam, Uthamapalayam and Andipatti as of 30 February 2022. To obtain primary data for the study, the researcher used multistage sampling. In the first stage, the five taluks were selected. In the final stage, 150 customers from each taluk were chosen based on convenience sampling. Therefore, the sample contains 750 customers. With the use of an interview schedule, primary data were obtained from 750 customers. A schedule was developed using the Likert scale technique. Secondary data were gathered mainly from journals, periodicals, books, and unpublished dissertations. To arrive at a usable conclusions, the data obtained for the study was edited, quantified, categorized and tabulated, and analysed. Statistical tools such the student t test, analysis of variance, analysis of co-efficient of variation, multiple regression analysis and percentage analysis were used to analyse the data.

## **5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**



Table 1: Green Product Awareness of Respondents

<b>Green Products</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Furniture & home appliances	332	44.27
Solar lamps/heaters	367	48.93
Fabric/clothing	439	58.53
Toiletries	598	79.73
Paper bags/cups/plates	609	81.20
Organic vegetables/fruits	695	92.67
Cosmetic/body care	750	100.00
Groceries/food products	750	100.00

*Source: Primary Data*

Green products such as furniture and home appliances, solar lamps/heaters, fabric/clothing, and toiletries are known by 44.27 per cent to 79.73 per cent of respondents. In Theni district, 81.20 per cent, 92.67 per cent, 100 per cent, and 100 per cent of respondents are aware of green products such as paper bags/cups/plates, organic vegetables/fruits, cosmetic/body care, and groceries/food products respectively.

Table 2: Sources of Information for Green Product Awareness

<b>Sources of Information</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Seminars/conferences	102	13.60
Internet/mail/blogs	117	15.60
Posters and pamphlets	207	27.60
Advertisements in television	224	29.87
Banners and hoardings	248	33.07
1) Newspapers and magazines	308	41.07
Salesmen/representatives	359	47.87
Advertisements in radio	390	52.00
Retailers/shop keepers	428	57.07
Friends and relatives	479	63.87
Word of mouth	540	72.00

*Source: Primary Data*

Respondents ranging from 13.60 per cent to 41.07 per cent are aware of green products through seminars/conferences, internet/mail/blogs, posters and pamphlets, advertisements on television, banners and hoardings, and newspapers and magazines. Green products are known to respondents in a range of 47.87 per cent to 72 per cent through salesmen/representatives, radio advertisements, retailers/shopkeepers, friends and relatives, and word of mouth.



Table 3: Relationship between Customer Demographics and Green Product Awareness: Student t-Test

Demographics of Academics	t Value	D.F	Table Value at 5% Level	Result
Gender	0.419	748	1.963	Ns
Type of customers	0.035	748	1.963	Ns
Family pattern	0.264	748	1.963	Ns

Source: Primary Data.

The calculated t-value for gender is (0.419) lower than the table value at the 5% level of significance (1.963). Therefore, there is no significant difference in green product awareness between male and female customers. The calculated t-value for type of customers is (0.035) smaller than the table value at the 5% significance level (1.963). Hence, when it comes to green product awareness, there is no significant difference between behavioural greens and think greens. The calculated t-value for family pattern is (0.264) smaller than the table value at the 5% significance level (1.963). Therefore, there is no significant difference in green product awareness between joint family and nuclear family customers. Therefore, the null hypothesis has been accepted.

Table 4: Relationship between Customer Demographics and Green Product Awareness: F Test

	Source of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Table Value	Result
Age	Between groups	3	71.403	23.801	1.084	2.617	Not significant
	Within groups	746	16374.636	21.950			
	Total	749	16446.039				
Education	Between groups	4	147.855	36.964	1.690	2.384	Not significant
	Within groups	745	16298.184	21.877			
	Total	749	16446.039				
Occupation	Between groups	4	98.940	24.735	1.127	2.384	Not significant
	Within groups	745	16347.099	21.942			
	Total	749	16446.039				
Monthly household income	Between groups	3	123.444	41.148	1.881	2.617	Not significant
	Within groups	746	16322.595	21.880			
	Total	749	16446.039				

Source: Primary Data.

The calculated F value for age is (1.084) lower than the table value at the 5% level of significance (2.614). Hence, there is no significant relationship between customer age and green product awareness. The calculated F-value for education is (1.690) lower than the table value at the 5% level of significance (2.384). Therefore, there is no significant relationship between education and awareness of green products. In the case of the occupation, the

calculated F value (1.127) is lower than the table value (2.384) at the 5% significance level. Thus, there is no significant relationship between green product awareness and customers from various occupations. In the case of monthly household income, the calculated F value (1.881) is lower than the table value (2.617) at a significance level of 5%. Hence, there is no significant relationship between customer awareness of green products and monthly household income groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant relationship between green product awareness and customers from various demographic groups (age, education, occupation, and monthly household income).

Table 5.1: Effect of Personal Variables on Respondents' Green Product Awareness

Personal Variables	B	Std. Error	t	Result
(Constant)	47.357	1.260	-	-
Gender	0.217	0.421	0.515	Ns
Age	0.089	0.183	0.485	Ns
Educational status	-0.097	0.158	-0.612	Ns
Monthly household income	0.180	0.186	0.967	Ns
Family pattern	-0.120	0.405	-0.296	Ns
Type of customer	-0.012	0.348	-0.035	Ns

Source: Primary Data.

Ns Not significant

Table 5.2: Multiple Correlation Coefficients between Personal Variables and Green Product Awareness

R	R Square	F	Result
0.049	0.002	0.304	Ns

Source: Primary Data.

According to the above analysis, there is a low correlation (0.049) between the acceptance score on green product awareness and the selected personal factors. The R square suggests that all personal variables together account for 0.20 per cent of variation in green product awareness. The F value indicates that the multiple correlation coefficients are not significant. Furthermore, the respondents' awareness of green products is unaffected by gender, age, educational status, monthly household income, family pattern, or customer type.

Table 6: Levels of Green Product Awareness among Respondents

Statements	Level of Awareness					Total	Mean Score
	Fully Aware	Aware	Neither Aware nor Not Aware	Not Aware	Not at all Aware		



Green products are originally developed	148 (19.73)	197 (26.27)	207 (27.60)	125 (16.67)	73 (9.73)	750 (100.00)	3.30
Green products are made using natural or renewable resources	141 (18.80)	223 (29.73)	205 (27.33)	120 (16.00)	61 (8.13)	750 (100.00)	3.35
Green products benefits health	164 (21.87)	163 (21.73)	251 (33.47)	111 (14.80)	61 (8.13)	750 (100.00)	3.34
Green products protects environment	39 (5.20)	268 (35.73)	215 (28.67)	172 (22.93)	56 (7.47)	750 (100.00)	3.08
Green products concern for future generation	178 (23.73)	156 (20.80)	261 (34.80)	114 (15.20)	41 (5.47)	750 (100.00)	3.42
Point of purchase of the green products	47 (6.27)	283 (37.73)	217 (28.93)	132 (17.60)	71 (9.47)	750 (100.00)	3.14
Green products are offered in various brands	104 (13.87)	141 (18.80)	294 (39.20)	127 (16.93)	84 (11.20)	750 (100.00)	3.07
Green products have various symbols and certifications	105 (14.00)	159 (21.20)	182 (24.27)	176 (23.47)	128 (17.07)	750 (100.00)	2.92
Price of green products is high	87 (11.60)	248 (33.07)	169 (22.53)	179 (23.87)	67 (8.93)	750 (100.00)	3.15
Green products can be reused, degradable or recycled	93 (12.40)	187 (24.93)	259 (34.53)	168 (22.40)	43 (5.73)	750 (100.00)	3.16
Green products are natural and biodegradable	101 (13.47)	216 (28.80)	298 (39.73)	107 (14.27)	28 (3.73)	750 (100.00)	3.34
Green products contains recycled content	91 (12.13)	201 (26.80)	150 (20.00)	206 (27.47)	102 (13.60)	750 (100.00)	2.96
Green products are energy efficient	155 (20.67)	167 (22.27)	166 (22.13)	127 (16.93)	135 (18.00)	750 (100.00)	3.11
Green products conserve natural resources	142 (18.93)	257 (34.27)	177 (23.60)	121 (16.13)	53 (7.07)	750 (100.00)	3.42
Green products are less polluting	150 (20.00)	188 (25.07)	146 (19.47)	168 (22.40)	98 (13.07)	750 (100.00)	3.17
Overall	116 (15.47)	204 (27.20)	213 (28.40)	144 (19.20)	73 (9.73)	750 (100.00)	3.19

Source: Primary Data

When it comes to green product awareness, the majority of respondents say they are



neither aware nor not aware (28.40 per cent), followed by aware (27.20 per cent) and not aware (19.20 percent). Green products are fully aware by 15.47 per cent of respondents and not at all aware by 9.73 per cent of respondents. According to the mean score, respondents are more aware (3.42) of green products that are concerned for future generations and conserve natural resources, followed by products manufactured from natural or renewable resources (3.35). Respondents have a low level of awareness when it comes to green product symbols and certifications (2.92).

## 6. FINDINGS

1. Green products such as furniture and home appliances, solar lamps/heaters, fabric/clothing, and toiletries are known by 44.27 per cent to 79.73 per cent of respondents. In Theni district, 81.20 per cent, 92.67 per cent, 100 per cent, and 100 per cent of respondents are aware of green products such as paper bags/cups/plates, organic vegetables/fruits, cosmetic/body care, and groceries/food products respectively.
2. Respondents ranging from 13.60 per cent to 41.07 per cent are aware of green products through seminars/conferences, internet/mail/blogs, posters and pamphlets, advertisements on television, banners and hoardings, and newspapers and magazines. Green products are known to respondents in a range of 47.87 per cent to 72 per cent through salesmen/representatives, radio advertisements, retailers/shopkeepers, friends and relatives, and word of mouth.
3. There is no significant relationship between the level of awareness of respondents from various genders, age groups, educational status groups, occupations, monthly household income groups, types, and family patterns about green products.
4. There is a low correlation (0.049) between the acceptance score on green product awareness and the selected personal factors. The R square suggests that all personal variables together account for 0.20 per cent of variation in green product awareness. The F value indicates that the multiple correlation coefficients are not significant. Furthermore, the respondents' awareness of green products is unaffected by gender, age, educational status, monthly household income, family pattern, or customer type.
5. When it comes to green product awareness, the majority of respondents say they are neither aware nor not aware (28.40 per cent), followed by aware (27.20 per cent) and not aware (19.20 percent). Green products are fully aware by 15.47 per cent of respondents and not at all aware by 9.73 per cent of respondents. Respondents are more



aware (3.42) of green products that are concerned for future generations and conserve natural resources, followed by products manufactured from natural or renewable resources (3.35). Respondents have a low level of awareness when it comes to green product symbols and certifications (2.92).

6. When it comes to problems with purchasing green products, the majority of respondents agree (28.80 per cent), followed by disagree (23.20 per cent), and neither agree nor disagree (22.13 per cent). Concerning problems in the procurement of green products, 17.73 per cent and 8.13 per cent of respondents strongly agree and strongly disagree, respectively. Respondents show a higher level of acceptability (3.58) for companies' failure to follow green policies, followed by a lack of awareness of green products (3.57). Respondents who are resistant to change have a lower acceptance score (2.92).

## 7. SUGGESTIONS

1. More information about the environmental features of products is being made available by producers through eco-labeling as customers' environmental concerns grow. As a result, marketers should place a premium on giving clear information about green products and eco-labels in order to increase customer familiarity with and knowledge of green products.
2. Green alliances should make an effort to educate people about how natural environments work, as well as how humans may control their behaviour and ecology in order to live sustainably. Environmental education may be included in educational institutions' curriculum. Customers should be educated about the benefits of green products through awareness campaigns.
3. Online social networks such as Facebook and Twitter have become popular. Therefore, marketers should make greater use of online social media to advertise and promote their green products. As a result, green purchasing intentions and user reviews on green products and environmental challenges can be shared on social media to get exposure.
4. When making a green purchase, customers must check for eco-labels. ISO 14024 has standardized the eco-label, which is accepted all over the world. Look for eco-logo or green seal products that have been approved by a reputable and independent third-party. Hence, certified green product labels could be introduced for approved green products. Governments can enact new legislation to punish organisations that engage in greenwashing and those that have negative environmental effects as a result of their



production and manufacturing practices.

5. Corporate enviropreneurship and entrepreneurial innovations that solve environmental problems and result in operational improvements, innovative technology, and marketable green products should be fostered through green alliances.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Environmental issues have become a major concern for any business that wants to compete successfully. Due to escalating challenges such as acid rain, ozone layer depletion, land degradation, and many other critical environmental issues, environmentalism has developed as a vital business movement over the last decade. As consumers and marketers become more conscious of the effects of global warming, non-biodegradable solid waste, and the detrimental effects of pollution, for example, both marketers and customers are becoming more sensitive to the need to switch to green products. Furthermore, academics, policymakers, and practitioners have shown an increased interest in green marketing through research and practice in recent years. In this context, the current study used a sample of 750 customers to measure the level of customer awareness with green products in Theni district. The researcher suggests a number of measures to expand the market for green products.

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