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## Green Consumerism Awareness and Practices among Women in Mangalore City

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### Abstract

Green consumerism has become the buzzword in academic research, corporate sectors and seminars. The notion of green consuming has become popular as a means of addressing environmental concerns without compromising the market driven economy. This paper examines the influence of women consumers' environmental concerns, awareness of green product, and price and brand image on their purchasing decision of green products in Mangaluru city of coastal Karnataka.

**Keywords:** Environmental concern, Green products, Household behaviour, Women.

### 1. Introduction

The rapid economic growth in the past years have witnessed increasing consumers' consumption worldwide causing environmental deterioration through over-consumption and utilization of natural resources (Chen & Chai, 2010). Severity of environmental deterioration (Meadows et al., 1972) is necessitating technological changes but also changes in attitude and behavior of consumers. Increasing pro-environmental concerns and awareness of eco-friendly products among consumers have resulted in their green buying behaviour.

### Meaning of Green Consumerism

Defining green consumerism is not a simple task. Indeed, the terminology used in this area has varied, it includes: Green consumerism, environmental consumerism and ethical consumerism. The idea is that if consumers are environmentally and socially conscious, purchase only products or commodities that do not have troubled environmental and social legacies in production and processing, and boycott harmful commodities, then producers will change environmentally and socially harmful processes. Consumers are therefore a proactive and powerful agent of change

### 2. Women's Role in the Environment.

What is the connection between women and the environment in consumer research? Statistics indicate that 80% of household shopping is performed by women (Berk 1988). Therefore, environmentally-related purchase behaviour is left primarily in the hands of the female consumer. A substantial burden has been placed on women consumers to attend to the environmental crisis. With women's role as primary caretaker still intact within most segments of society (Ferree 1987; De Vault 1987), women have had to take on an additional role: that of caretaker of the planet. In this context this paper deals with the empirical findings related to attitudes and green purchasing behaviour of women selected from the Mangalore urban agglomeration of Karnataka State. The present research paper assesses women consumers' pro-environmental concerns, knowledge of environmental issues, awareness of eco-friendly products, effects of income level and educational levels and any potential effect that these factors may have on green buying behaviour and on household green practices.

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### 3. Objectives

The present study focuses on the following objectives:

1. To categorize the household as the primary locus of change to bring about transformation in attitudes towards environment.
2. To analyze the influence factor in going green.
3. To look upon the hurdles within green consumerism.
4. To study the relationship between environmental values and consumer satisfaction.
5. To elucidate the link between consumer's pro-environmental attitudes and green consumer behavior.
6. To highlight significant differences in the environmental attitudes when analyzed by demographic variables.

### 4. Design/Methodology/Approach

A survey approach was adopted comprising individual's environmental values and actions and pro-environmental behaviour. Women with higher educational qualifications were deliberately over-represented in the sample, to achieve a statistically significant sample in urban area. Around 50 women consumers of Mangalore city were contacted and their responses were recorded with the help of a structured questionnaire.

### 5. Results and Analysis

#### A. Demographics

**Table-1** Age-Wise Classification of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-30	14	28
30-40	15	30
40-50	15	30
50 and above	6	12
Total	50	100

Source: Field survey data

As seen in the table-1, out of 50 consumers, majority (60 per cent) of the respondents belong to the age- group of below 50 years.

**Table 2:** Annual Income of the Respondent

Annual Income (Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
Below 50,000	4	8
5,00,000-2,00,000	6	12
2,00,000-4,00,000	21	42
Above 5,00,000	19	38
Total	50	100

Source: Field survey data

Table-2 shows the distribution of the respondents based on their total annual income. The average annual income of 42 percent of the respondents is in the income-group of ₹ 2-4 lakh and 12 per cent earn an average annual emolument below 2 lakh. The respondents whose annual income is above-5 lakh account for 38 per cent. Only 8 per cent of the respondents stated that their total annual income is below 50,000. They were mainly part time workers.

**Table-3:** Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percent
PUC	1	2

Graduation	1	2
Post-Graduation	48	96
Total	50	100

Source: Field survey data

Table-3 represents the educational qualification of the respondents. Out of the total respondents 2 per cent had education up to PUC whereas another 2 per cent are graduates. And 96 percent respondents were post graduates. This trend discloses that majority of the respondents represent higher educational background.

**Table-4:** Occupational Status of the Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Salaried	42	84
Self employed	1	2
Professional Service	2	4
Home maker	1	2
Student	4	8
Total	50	100

Source: Field survey data

Table-4 shows the occupational status of the respondents. Out of the total 50 respondents' majority (84 per cent) belong to salaried class whereas 8 per cent were students. Professional service group (4 per cent), self-employed (2 per cent) and homemakers (2 per cent) represent least percentage of respondents.

#### B. Consumer Perceptions and Awareness

Knowledge about ecological issues is a significant predictor of environmental friendly behaviour (Chan, 1999). Specifically, knowledge is a relevant and significant construct that affects how consumers gather and organize information (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987), to what extent they use information in decision making (Brucks, 1985) and how consumers evaluate products and services (Murray and Schlacter, 1990). Knowledge about ecological issues is a significant predictor of environmental friendly behaviour (Chan, 1999)

Participants were given a list of ten major environmental issues and asked to identify one environmental issue that concerned them the most. Out of 50 respondents a majority (58 percent) considered food contamination by pesticides as the major environmental issue. 14 percent considered global warming as the major issue and drinking water was recognized by 10 percent. Factors like Climate change (10 per cent), drinking water (10 per cent), industrial pollution, (2%) solid wastes (6%) were given least importance by consumers. Whereas consumers were not bothered about issues like ozone depletion, Air quality, recycling issues and

**Table -5:** Perceived Changes in the Global Environment.

Environmental issue that concerned the consumer most.

Adiation by cell phones etc

S.No	Environmental Issue	Frequency	Percent
1	Climate change	5	10
2	Global Warming	7	14
3	Food contamination by pesticides	29	58
4	Drinking water	5	10
5	Industrial pollution	1	2
6	Solid wastes	3	6
7	Ozone depletion	0	0
8	Air quality	0	0
9	Recycling issues	0	0
10	Radiation by cell phones etc	0	0
	Total	50	100

**Table -6: Hurdles in Green Consumerism**

S.No	Reasons	Number of responses(50)	Percentage	Rankings
1	Too expensive	24	48	3
2	No proper, adequate and timely knowledge about green products/brands	20	40	5
3	Green products do not look as good as grey(non-green) products	10	20	8
4	Sometimes, consumers are cheated by companies in the name of green products	22	44	4
5	Do not normally trust green product claim	09	18	9
6	Inconvenient to recycle after use	01	02	10
7	Green products are hard to identify on the shelf/logo	17	34	6
8	Advantages of eating/using green products are not clearly known	12	24	7
9	Lack of green advertising	26	52	2
10	Green products are not found in small stores	34	68	1

Source: Field survey data

An attempt has been made to identify the reasons as to why the green products have not been preferred by the consumers. Table -6 states that significant 68 per cent respondents were of the opinion that green products are not found in small stores, a 52 per cent supports the fact that there is lack of green advertising and 48 per cent states that they are too expensive. About 44 per cent opined that consumers are cheated by companies in the name of green products and 40 percent supported the fact that no proper, adequate and timely knowledge about green products/brands.

#### C. Consumers' willingness-to-pay for eco-friendly products

Price is the attribute that consumers reflect on when making a green-purchasing decision.

Consumers' awareness of green product significantly influences their purchasing decision.

**Table-7: Consumers' willingness-to-pay for eco-friendly products**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	38	76
No	12	24
Total	50	100

It has been observed that 76 per cent of the respondents are willing to pay more for green products (Table-7). Only 24 per cent of the respondents are not ready to pay more for eco-friendly products.

#### D. Consumer Intentions and Lifestyle measures

Research according to Sheinberg et al. (1998) has shown that across many cultures, women handle waste in their homes. Women are the driving force behind two-thirds of households that regularly recycle.

**Table -8: Ways of reducing waste at home and office**

S.No	Reasons	Number of responses(50)	Percentage	Rankings
1	Use double sided copies	34	68	5
2	Use reusable plates, cups, or utensils	37	74	3
3	Carry a reusable bottle	35	70	4
4	Avoid plastic packaging	38	76	2
5	Carry my own bag for shopping	44	88	1
6	Other (Please specify)	0	0	6

Source: Field survey data

Table -8 shows that 88 per cent consumers agreed that carrying their own bag reduces the problem of solid waste and 76 per cent were in favor of avoiding plastic packaging 74 people considered reuse of cups plate and other utensils is an effective method of reducing waste.

#### E. Consumers' pro-environmental concern and green buying behaviour

##### Environmental concern

Environmental concern is a strong attitude towards preserving the environment (Cosby et al., 1981). Environmental concern is also sometimes known as "ecological concern", which refers to the degree of emotionality, the amount of specific factual knowledge, and the level of willingness as well as the

extent of actual behaviour on pollution-environmental issues (Maloney and Ward, 1973).

##### Green Purchasing Behaviour

Green purchasing behaviour refers to the preference and use of products that are friendly to the environment and/or have been produced using ecological processes and materials. A number of benefits are derived from the adoption of eco-friendly purchasing behaviour, such as health, safety, symbolism, and status (Ottman et al., 2006). Consumers were given a set of eco-friendly products that they can find in their supermarket. And they were asked to indicate the extent to which they purchased these products.

**Table 9:** shows the data and information regarding respondents' green purchasing behaviour.

Si.No	Product Type	Most Purchased (%)	Ranking
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1	Organically-grown fruits and vegetables	82	1
2	Recycled paper products	44	6
3	Health care products	64	3
4	Cosmetics	50	5
5	Cleaning products	58	4
6	Other household products (e.g. Bulb etc.)	66	2

Source: Field survey data

In respect of frequency of buying green products, organically grown fruits and vegetables have priority over the other category of green products (82 percent). Other household products (e.g. Bulb etc.) (66 per cent) and Health care products (64 per cent) were ranked next important frequently bought green products. Cleaning products (58 per cent) Cosmetics (50 per cent) Recycled paper products. By this it can be perceived that on an average the consumers buy these green products not very frequently.

#### Limitations & Further Research

The sample size was very small and it was particularly collected from Mangalore city so there was geographical constraints too. These results, however, support a generally prevailing notion that more educated people tend to be green buyers and hence warrant a larger study conducted on a randomly selected sample. The questionnaires were distributed to highly educated respondents so they tend to be eco-friendlier as compared to others.

Future research is recommended to improve the generalizability of the sampling by expanding the sample size and carrying out survey at different geographical areas.

#### Conclusion

This research is endowed with additional information in narrowing the research gap with regards to understanding women consumers' green awareness and their green purchasing behaviour. Findings could provide fruitful insights for environmental sustainability that enable marketers to prop up greener consumption behaviour among consumers.

Findings from this work also suggest that even in an educated segment like the one chosen for this study, willing to pay premium receives an underwhelming response. This trend suggests that the producers of Indian market need to consider 'cost cutting' strategies. If the consumer's demands increase the costs of production of eco-friendly products will reduce. Awareness among consumers that their buying choices can make a difference to the environment should be promoted to accelerate the consumption of eco-friendly products. (Ishaswini, 2010).

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