

Role of Ethics and Personal Value of Younger Generation Customers in Buying Behavior of Eco-Friendly Products - A Study in Kollam District

Mr. Anil Kumar. N¹ and Dr. Mridanish Jha²

¹*Ph.D. (Part-Time) Research Scholar, Faculty of Management Studies, ICFAI University, Ranchi, Jharkhand*

²*Associate Professor, Faculty of Management Studies, ICFAI University, Ranchi, Jharkhand*

Abstract

The present study is concerned with buying behaviour of younger generation consumers of the eco-friendly products. The environmental issues have been taking new shape everyday due to modernization. These environmental changes have evolved the use of different chemical based products which have caused hazardous effects on the health of living organisms on earth. The risk of environmental degradation has been constantly increasing which is the matter of concern. To protect the environment from such degradation, the idea of choosing environmentally friendly products are being implemented for protecting our environment. The moral standards and the ethical values of the young generation have evolved them in using such eco-friendly products. This scenario has been proved efficient when the qualitative survey was done in the region of Kollam district constituting the young people from the colleges.

Keywords: Eco-friendly, ethics, personal value, young generation

1. INTRODUCTION

Environmental protection has been considered as an important strategy to protect the natural resources from destruction (Pino et al., 2012). This has led towards the awareness of protecting our natural resources. The awareness regarding the same has motivated the consumers to contribute towards sustainable development, mainly for the environment protection (Moser, 2015). The frequent change in the consumption behaviour to inherit the green consumption method leads towards the development of increased consumption involving more solid waste production (Ramayah et al., 2010). The eco-friendly products are those products that will not harm the earth or deplete the natural resources and are capable of recycling. These products are made from the organic elements and do not cause any harm to the environment. The eco friendly products have contributed towards the green living that has helped in the conservation of the natural resources. The initiation of the “green purchasing” method has been considered to be an effective measure in reducing the negative environmental impact and has developed the strategies for using the environmentally friendly product (Leonidou et al., 2013). The term “green” has been considered as the environment friendly term and is being used independently across the world. In India, it has been estimated that the rate of environmental impact has increased due to the use of packaging materials being used for household consumption (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2014). This has led towards the negative impact in the environment resulting in the development of more waste products. Looking at the scenarios of the environmental degradation, it has been revealed that the Indian consumers are much more aware concerning the environmental impact rather than the consumers from the other countries like China, Brazil, Russia, Canada, Germany and America (Greendex, 2012).

Many researches have revealed that the Indian states have banned the use of plastics due to environmental degradation issues (Clapp & Swanston, 2009). Use of plastic bags was declared offensive in Jharkhand in 2018 and the government put a ban on the export, import and use of plastics in the state (Kumar, 2020). The regularized implication of the green purchasing decisions adopted by the buyers will contribute towards a positive impact of the environment involving the higher use of eco-friendly products. Many Indian companies have adopted the strategy of buying environmental friendly products in order to protect the environment and maintain its sustainability. Some of the Indian companies like HCL have developed an eco-friendly notebook range named HCL ME, MRF has evolved the manufacturing of eco-friendly tyres

and Tata has developed eco-friendly air conditioners (Yadav & Pathak, 2013). These manufacturing of the eco-friendly products have evolved the globalization of green marketing practices with higher profit.

The buying of eco-friendly products has increased and the green purchasing method has spread awareness among the consumers and the buyers to protect the environment (Zhu and Sarkis, 2016). The current situation of the market has evolved the production of several eco friendly products. The capitalist economy of the market has given a major impact on the principles, values and behaviour of the customers in production and buying of the eco friendly products to avoid the chances of pollution and processing of more eco friendly products (de Medeiros and Ribeiro, 2017). This scenario has led towards the availability of more eco friendly products. Some of the researchers have revealed that the environmental concerns have been working as precursors to environmental knowledge while other researchers have found that these environmental concerns have evolved the positivity among the individuals related to the awareness of using these eco-products (Joshi and Rahman, 2015). The buyers are very much aware towards their decision of purchasing the green products for the sake of environmental protection and have evolved good images of the companies that are initiating the manufacturing of products to protect the environment. Age has been considered as another important in the buying behavioral analysis regarding eco regarding eco friendly products. The individuals of the younger age group have more influence towards the purchasing of eco-friendly products.

The current study reveals the participation of the young age group people who have evolved in the environmental protection act. A survey in the colleges of Kollam district is care and the interest of the students in the protection of the environment is analyzed by the set of questionnaires regarding the use of eco-friendly products. This study has proved to be effective in showing the interest of young people in adopting the use of such products for protecting the environment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 POLLUTION AND ITS OVERARCHING EFFECTS

Recent studies on pollution states that approximately nine million people are dying annually due to the effects of pollution that mostly includes the young children (around 1.7 million) and older people (4.9 million). Around 94% people are dying annually due to the pollution occurrence in the lower-middle income countries (Landrigan & Fuller, 2016). It has also been revealed that the developing countries accounts for loss of healthy lives due to pollution for about 15 times that of the developed countries (WHO, 2013). Talking about the pollutants which are responsible for causing pollution in the environment, arsenic has been the widely studied pollutant that occurs naturally in the eastern part of India and Bangladesh contaminating the water. The same scenario is applicable for anthropogenic pollutants which have a major impact on humans. It has been evaluated in the region of Murshidabad in India that 0.32 million of population was exposed to arsenic among the total population of 1.07 million (Samadder, 2011). Mercury has been also considered as a hazardous pollutant which has affected the human and other living organisms. The US economy was affected due to the anthropogenic mercury emission (Trasande et al., 2005).

The pollution has caused a major impact on health by decreasing the land viability for agriculture along with the water shortage and reduction of trees. The people dwelling near the slum areas are more affected due to the pollution as they do not have adequate conditions to protect them from the pollution and have a very low economy for the treatment of diseases if suffered (Bolwig et al., 2008).

Certain environmental factors have affected the environment in many ways, majorly deteriorating human health. These factors include the greenhouse gas emission, land and water pollution, waste generation and water usage. The motor vehicle emission was controlled by the implementation of the law concerning the pollution risk. Water pollution has affected the major sectors in the US. The cost of water treatment has increased in the US due to the presence of algal bloom. The waterfront properties cost reduced to less in number due to the contaminated water. The plastic pollution in the seas and oceans have affected the life of flora and fauna. China has even stopped the use of plastic recycling as it has affected the public health and environment.

2.2 ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS AND ITS NEED

The eco-friendly products are products of the modern era which have been proved to be beneficial and have evolved in the cost-efficient manner by utilizing the waste resources. The increasing pollution has evolved the consumers to produce environmental friendly products to prevent the pollution and these products are known as eco friendly products (Chen and Deng, 2016). The eco-friendly products are also considered to be the source of ecological products that protect the environment by controlling the pollution rate and have less negative impact on the environment (Mei et al., 2012). Some of the researchers have also considered the eco-friendly products as reusable, recyclable consisting of natural and recycled ingredients to protect the environment by conserving the natural resources and reducing the pollution rate, wastes and other toxic agents (Mishra and Sharma, 2010). Other researchers have revealed that the eco-friendly products contain natural contents and packaging that helps in reducing the pollution impact in the environment (Chen and Chai, 2010). Qader and Zainuddin have stated that eco-friendly products cause no harm to the natural resources and are capable of recycling (Qader and Zainuddin, 2011). The environmental degradation is increasing day by day and to maintain the sustainability of the environment, eco-friendly products are being used. By utilizing such products, individuals are contributing towards the preservation of the resources and the environment. The major use of such products will also increase the market share of the consumers and will evolve the manufacturing of more products by maintaining the cost-efficiency. This will also benefit the environment by decreasing the pollution rate and maintaining the viability of living organisms.

The need for the use of eco-friendly products have increased due to the increase of the pollution in the environment. These products provide personal benefit to the individuals by implementing a healthy lifestyle. These products are prepared from natural resources and are devoid of any chemicals, causing no harm to the individuals. The use of these products have been very efficient in increasing the quality of life along with the maintaining of health and age, ensuring more safety and concern regarding the health issues.

2.3 ROLE OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION IN POPULARIZING ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

India being one of the most popular countries with the highest population, and considering the population growth rates, the majority of the population in the coming years will comprise the young generation. Thus to make a difference in the pollution status, it is the young population who should be targeted to raise awareness related to use of eco-friendly products. The young generation are often open up to the consciousness regarding the environmental problems and focus on using the products which will be eco-friendly (Roberts et al., 2005). The schools and colleges are adapting the green habits which involve the use of eco friendly products and some of them have even developed courses regarding the environmental concern. The young generation are more concerned about the green behaviour which further leads to change their attitudes towards environmental behaviour (Lee, 2008; 2010). Their awareness regarding the environmental concern are being implemented to the future generation who will also encourage the use of such products. Hence this will lead towards a path with a healthy life.

2.4 IMPACT OF ETHICS AND PERSONAL VALUE OF YOUNG ECO-FRIENDLY CUSTOMERS BUYING BEHAVIOR

It has been considered that the ethical concern or awareness of the consumers have influenced the buying behaviour positive as well as negative manner. Many of the times it has been noticed that the personal needs of the individual have been considered more important than the ethical issues (Jeorgens, 2006). It is also believed that the ethical concern of the firm has influenced the decision of the individual for buying the products. The awareness of environmental protection has also led towards the strategy of boycotting the chemical based products in order to protect the environment and maintain a healthy lifestyle (Creyer& Ross, 1997). Therefore the young generation are responsible in taking initiative measures to protect our environment. Their personal value and ethical concern together develop an aspect of using eco-friendly products. The ethical consciousness has indeed helped the customers to deal with the buying behaviour of the eco friendly products.

3. RESEARCH GAP

From the literature review of the current study, it has been formulated that the environmental degradation has been the major cause of pollution and is affecting the life of living beings on earth. To preserve the environment from degradation, steps have been taken by the people to deal with the major issue. Therefore the use of eco-friendly products have been launched in the market to preserve the environment from further degradation. But it has also been observed that the majority of the people are still not adopting the use of such products as they are unaware about the eco-friendly products. The young generation people are only proven to use these products as they are the people of the age group who are updated regarding the harmful effects of using the chemical based products. Hence this scenario has proved to be the major research gap in the current study as only the young generation are adopting the use of eco-friendly products. Therefore, all age group people should be aware of such products and its adaptation needs to be made mandatory.

Another major point that needs to be focused in the current study is the banning and boycotting of the use of certain products that cause pollution in the environment or are acting as the pollutants. The use of substances that on degradation when released in the environment affects life should be boycotted or banned. It has been observed that many of the developing countries are still using plastic bags. The use of plastic bags should be strictly banned and the banning should be made legalised. Therefore the boycotting or banning of such harmful products need to be implemented in the countries as still many countries are not following the environmental protection policies.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

From the literature review it has been analyzed that the use of eco-friendly products in the environment has influenced the majority of the young generation. Their attitude towards buying behaviour has changed. They are being more aware to use these products for preserving the environment from degradation. To implement the current study at a wider range, a conceptual framework is developed. This framework constitutes the theoretical and managerial implications. The understanding and knowledge regarding the environment and the issue being faced due to environmental degradation should be the initial step. The understanding of people and their attitude towards the same scenario is then followed. The attitude involves the behaviour and decision of people in adopting the strategies to protect the environment. This attitude leads towards the buying intention of the customers regarding the eco-friendly products. Hence, the buying behaviour of the customers has evolved from this attitude and intention. Personal and ethical values are the important factor in influencing the buying behaviour as these values consist of moral obligations which reflect an individual's moral standards. The buying behavior of the customers further involved the decision for adopting the strategy of using such products to make our environment pollution free.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study aims to increase the understanding of adopting eco-friendly products and the behaviour of the customers in buying such products. To implicit this understanding, a study done in Kollam district regarding the individual's buying behaviour of the eco-friendly product is highlighted. The study constitutes the data analysis on qualitative research where the questionnaire is prepared and surveyed, mainly in the colleges as more of the young generation age group are found in colleges only. The questionnaire includes the basic question related to the ethical inclination towards life, surrounding, poverty and the duty as a citizen for the future generation to come, agricultural aspects of organic food products, merchandising and distribution. The data was found to be surveyed among the students with different levels of qualifications and their thought process regarding the same was determined.

Hence this survey gives the understanding of the student's behaviour and their interest in using the eco-friendly products. The first thing analyzed in the study was the knowledge regarding the environment involving the issues and challenges among the individuals. Most of the individuals were found to be aware of the environmental knowledge and were concerned for its protection. Their ethical and personal values influenced them to develop moral standards and the aim of protecting the environment was the major concern among them. Their attitude towards the intention of using eco friendly products and implementing their morals to the future generation were observed to be highly influenced. Their buying behaviour towards such environmentally friendly products have been observed showing a positive impact.

The increasing pollution has evolved the consumers to enhance the purchasing of the eco-friendly products. This way the findings of the present study have implemented the consciousness of the individuals for opting towards the eco-friendly products, mainly the younger generation are more prone towards the use of these eco-friendly products in order to protect our environment. The eco-friendly product purchase has highly influenced the young generation as they are the only one who are capable of changing the decision of several other individuals by initiating the primary steps to protect our environment.

The current study has contributed towards the limited literature review on buying behaviour of the customers regarding the eco friendly products and how the personal and ethical values of the young generation have influenced this decision. Other studies have also proved the eco-friendly attitudes of the customers have favoured the use of environmental friendly products (Kronrod et al., 2012; Luchs et al., 2015). Many researchers have elaborated the intention of using the eco-friendly products due to the increasing environmental issues (Bickart& Ruth, 2012). Hence the buying behaviour among the customers are influenced due to such intentions of purchasing the products (Kim & Chung, 2011; Ha & Janda, 2012). It has also been revealed that the earlier studies have evolved the cost sensitiveness of the Indian consumers which has evolved from the buying behaviour of the customers when compared with other developing countries (Yadav & Pathak, 2016; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). The efforts by the Indian consumers in launching the eco-friendly products have involved their interest in protecting the environment from degradation. A positive relationship has been correlated among the consumers who are launching the eco-friendly products and the young generation who are adopting to buy such products, both of them aiming to protect the environment by implementing the green purchase strategy (Zagata, 2012; Kim et al., 2013).

Hence, the environmental concern among the individuals, mainly the young generation have shown positive influence in buying eco-friendly products. The concern has evolved the sense of responsibility among the individuals of the young age group for performing buying decisions and generating the ethical and personal values in order to implement the buying behaviour of eco-friendly products (Fujii, 2006). This has shown the interest of the youth contributing towards the strong concern of protecting the environment. Thus it is proved that Indian youth have indulged into the adaptation of environmental protection for purchasing the green products in Indian region (Prakash & Pathak, 2017).

6. CONCLUSION

The present study has been conducted with the aim of understanding the buying behaviour of the customers towards the purchasing of eco-friendly products influenced by their ethical and moral values. Mostly the young age group of people are involved in adapting this strategy of purchasing green products as the youths are known to be more aware about the environmental concerns. This study has supported the purchasing intention and the launching of green products into the market by the Indian consumers, influencing the moral standard of the customers and maintaining the ethical concern of the consumers. Indian consumers and the young generation shows correlation among themselves towards the eco-friendly products. The environmental issues and challenges are elaborated in the above sections which gives us a better understanding about the environmental concerns. The effects of environmental degradation on the life of living beings have also been discussed which will further help in involving the strategy of using eco-friendly products. The people have been aware of their health issues and have indulged into the adoption of such products. The youth are more prone to use these products as they are aware of every scenario of environmental degradation and are indulging into active participation to protect the environment. The future generation will be also following the same concern due to the awareness among the young generation. Hence for future it can be recommended that more studies should be involved accounting for the purchase strategies of such green products and considering the use of such products into the environment.

REFERENCES

1. Pino, G., Peluso, A.M. and Guido, G., 2012. Determinants of regular and occasional consumers' intentions to buy organic food. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 46(1), pp.157-169.
2. Moser, A.K., 2015. Thinking green, buying green? Drivers of pro-environmental purchasing behavior. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*.

3. Ramayah, T., Lee, J.W.C. and Mohamad, O., 2010. Green product purchase intention: Some insights from a developing country. *Resources, conservation and recycling*, 54(12), pp.1419-1427.
4. Leonidou, C.N., Katsikeas, C.S. and Morgan, N.A., 2013. "Greening" the marketing mix: Do firms do it and does it pay off? *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41(2), pp.151-170.
5. Kim, Y.J., Njite, D. and Hancer, M., 2013. Anticipated emotion in consumers' intentions to select eco-friendly restaurants: Augmenting the theory of planned behavior. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 34, pp.255-262.
6. Koenig-Lewis, N., Palmer, A., Dermody, J. and Urbye, A., 2014. Consumers' evaluations of ecological packaging—Rational and emotional approaches. *Journal of environmental psychology*, 37, pp.94-105.
7. <http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/greendex/2012-survey/> accessed on 7/05/2016
8. Clapp, J. and Swanston, L., 2009. Doing away with plastic shopping bags: international patterns of norm emergence and policy implementation. *Environmental politics*, 18(3), pp.315-332.
9. Yadav, R. and Pathak, G.S., 2013. Green marketing: Initiatives in the Indian context. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 43(10), pp.25-32.
10. Jauhari, V. and Manaktola, K., 2007. Exploring consumer attitude and behaviour towards green practices in the lodging industry in India. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management*.
11. Im, S., Bayus, B.L. and Mason, C.H., 2003. An empirical study of innate consumer innovativeness, personal characteristics, and new-product adoption behavior. *Journal of the academy of marketing science*, 31(1), pp.61-73.
12. Landrigan, P.J. and Fuller, R., 2016. Pollution, health and development: The need for a new paradigm. *Reviews on environmental health*, 31(1), pp.121-124.
13. World Health Organization, 2013. Number of deaths due to HIV/AIDS. *Global Health Observatory (GHO) data*. www.who.int/gho/hiv/en/(accessed 18 July 2017).
14. Samadder, S.R., 2011. Impact of arsenic pollution on spatial distribution of human development index. *KSCE Journal of Civil Engineering*, 15(6), pp.975-982.
15. Trasande, L., Landrigan, P.J. and Schechter, C., 2005. Public health and economic consequences of methyl mercury toxicity to the developing brain. *Environmental health perspectives*, 113(5), pp.590-596.
16. Bolwig, S., Ponte, S., Du Toit, A., Riisgaard, L. and Halberg, N., 2010. Integrating poverty and environmental concerns into value-chain analysis: a conceptual framework. *Development policy review*, 28(2), pp.173-194.
17. Roberts, B.W., Walton, K.E. and Viechtbauer, W., 2006. Patterns of mean-level change in personality traits across the life course: a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Psychological bulletin*, 132(1), p.1.
18. Lee, K., 2008. Opportunities for green marketing: young consumers. *Marketing intelligence & planning*.
19. Lee, K., 2010. The green purchase behavior of Hong Kong young consumers: The role of peer influence, local environmental involvement, and concrete environmental knowledge. *Journal of international consumer marketing*, 23(1), pp.21-44.
20. Barnes, L., Lea-Greenwood, G. and Joergens, C., 2006. Ethical fashion: myth or future trend?. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*.
21. Creyer, E.H., 1997. The influence of firm behavior on purchase intention: do consumers really care about business ethics?. *Journal of consumer Marketing*.
22. Kronrod, A., Grinstein, A. and Wathieu, L., 2012. Go green! Should environmental messages be so assertive?. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(1), pp.95-102.
23. Luchs, M.G., Swan, K.S. and Creusen, M.E., 2016. Perspective: A review of marketing research on product design with directions for future research. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 33(3), pp.320-341.
24. Bickart, B.A. and Ruth, J.A., 2012. Green eco-seals and advertising persuasion. *Journal of advertising*, 41(4), pp.51-67.

25. Kim, H.Y. and Chung, J.E., 2011. Consumer purchase intention for organic personal care products. *Journal of consumer Marketing*.
26. Ha, H.Y. and Janda, S., 2012. Predicting consumer intentions to purchase energy-efficient products. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*.
27. Prakash, G. and Pathak, P., 2017. Intention to buy eco-friendly packaged products among young consumers of India: A study on developing nation. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 141, pp.385-393.
28. Jauhari, V. and Manaktola, K., 2007. Exploring consumer attitude and behaviour towards green practices in the lodging industry in India. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management*.
29. Zagata, L., 2012. Consumers' beliefs and behavioural intentions towards organic food. Evidence from the Czech Republic. *Appetite*, 59(1), pp.81-89.
30. Fujii, S., 2006. Environmental concern, attitude toward frugality, and ease of behavior as determinants of pro-environmental behavior intentions. *Journal of environmental psychology*, 26(4), pp.262-268.
31. Kumar, P., 2020. Designing zero plastic policy and its implementation: major role of Law to protect environment, Plastic everywhere. *National Journal of Environmental Law*, 2(2).
32. Zhu, Q. and Sarkis, J., 2016. Green marketing and consumerism as social change in China: Analyzing the literature. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 181, pp.289-302.
33. de Medeiros, J.F. and Ribeiro, J.L.D., 2017. Environmentally sustainable innovation: Expected attributes in the purchase of green products. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 142, pp.240-248.
34. Joshi, Y. and Rahman, Z., 2015. Factors affecting green purchase behaviour and future research directions. *International Strategic management review*, 3(1-2), pp.128-143.
35. Chen, K. and Deng, T., 2016. Research on the green purchase intentions from the perspective of product knowledge. *Sustainability*, 8(9), p.943.
36. Mei, O.J., Ling, K.C. and Piew, T.H., 2012. The antecedents of green purchase intention among Malaysian consumers. *Asian Social Science*, 8(13), p.248.
37. Mishra, P. and Sharma, P., 2010. Green marketing in India: Emerging opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Engineering, Science and Management Education*, 3(1), pp.9-14.
38. Chen, T.B. and Chai, L.T., 2010. Attitude towards the environment and green products: Consumers' perspective. *Management science and engineering*, 4(2), pp.27-39