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A Study on Consumer Buying Behaviour on Eco-Friendly Products through Online Among College Students in Coimbatore

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ABSTRACT :

The increasing environmental awareness among consumers, especially the younger generation, has led to a shift in consumption patterns toward eco-friendly products. The rapid growth of e-commerce has further influenced this trend, providing consumers with greater access to sustainable goods. This study explores the buying behavior of college students in Coimbatore with respect to eco-friendly products through online platforms. It investigates their level of awareness, factors influencing their purchasing decisions, the challenges they encounter, and their satisfaction levels. A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data was collected from 150 students using a structured questionnaire. The study found that although students are aware and willing to purchase eco-friendly products online, several barriers such as price sensitivity, trust in product authenticity, and lack of availability limit their behavior. Recommendations are made to enhance awareness, transparency, and affordability to foster more sustainable consumption practices among youth.

Introduction

Global concerns about environmental degradation, climate change, and excessive waste generation have propelled the demand for eco-friendly and sustainable products. Consumers are increasingly becoming conscious of their purchasing decisions and their impact on the environment. This has led to a rising interest in green products—those that are produced and used in ways that minimize harm to the environment.

In India, the awareness and demand for eco-friendly products are steadily increasing, especially among urban youth who are exposed to global trends and values. Coimbatore, being an educational hub, houses a large number of college-going students who represent a significant segment of online consumers. Understanding their online buying behavior towards eco-friendly products is essential, as this group holds the potential to shape future market trends and promote sustainability.

This study aims to investigate the factors influencing college students' preferences, choices, and challenges when purchasing eco-friendly products online, thereby contributing to the growing body of literature on green consumer behavior.

Review of Literature

1. **Ottman et al. (2006)** highlighted that while green marketing appeals to environmentally conscious consumers, traditional values such as quality and price remain significant.
2. **Peattie (1995)** introduced the concept of green consumerism and emphasized that awareness alone is insufficient; convenience, availability, and perceived value are critical.
3. **Chen and Chang (2012)** found that trust and perceived product quality significantly influence consumers' willingness to buy green products online.
4. **Biswas & Roy (2015)** conducted research in emerging markets and revealed that although awareness is rising, skepticism regarding green claims and higher prices remain deterrents.
5. **Richa (2012)** emphasized the role of digital marketing and e-commerce in shaping consumer behavior, especially among the youth.

The literature underscores the importance of integrating environmental concerns with consumer expectations, and how online platforms can be leveraged to promote sustainable behavior.

Importance of the Study

This study is particularly significant for several reasons:

1. It addresses the gap in empirical data regarding youth behavior toward online green purchases.
2. It focuses on Coimbatore, a rapidly developing city with a high student population, which can serve as a model for similar urban centers.

3. The findings provide actionable insights for marketers, policymakers, and educators to formulate strategies to promote eco-friendly consumption.
4. It supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by encouraging responsible consumption.

Statement of the Problem

Although eco-friendly products are gaining popularity, the online buying behavior of college students in this context remains under-researched. There exists a gap between awareness and actual purchase behavior. The study seeks to address:

1. To what extent do college students in Coimbatore buy eco-friendly products online?
2. What factors motivate or discourage them?
3. Are they satisfied with their purchases?
4. What can be done to improve their green consumption habits?

Objectives of the Study

1. To measure the level of awareness about eco-friendly products among college students.
2. To understand the factors influencing their online purchasing decisions.
3. To assess their satisfaction with eco-friendly products bought online.
4. To identify the barriers to purchasing eco-friendly products online.
5. To suggest strategies to enhance the adoption of green products through online platforms.

Hypotheses

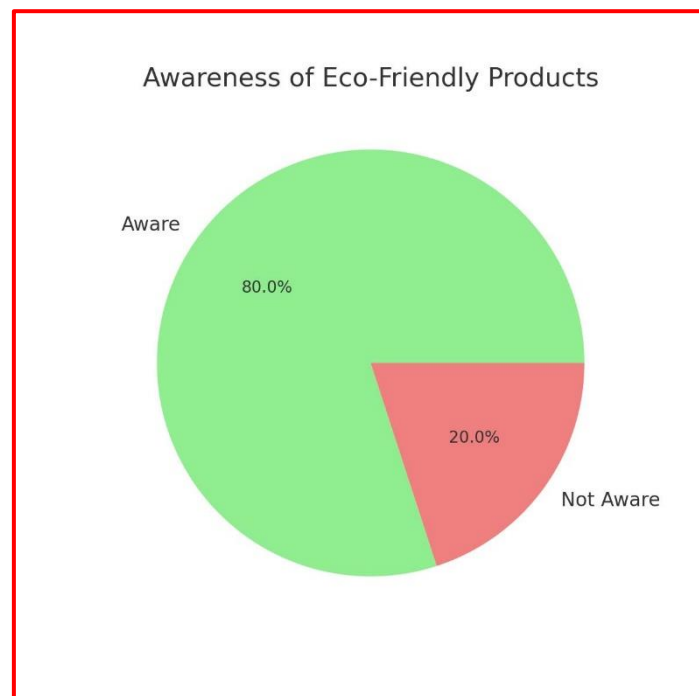
- **H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between environmental awareness and online purchase behavior of eco-friendly products.
- **H₀₂:** Peer influence does not significantly affect online green purchasing decisions.
- **H₀₃:** Price sensitivity has no significant impact on the decision to purchase eco-friendly products online.

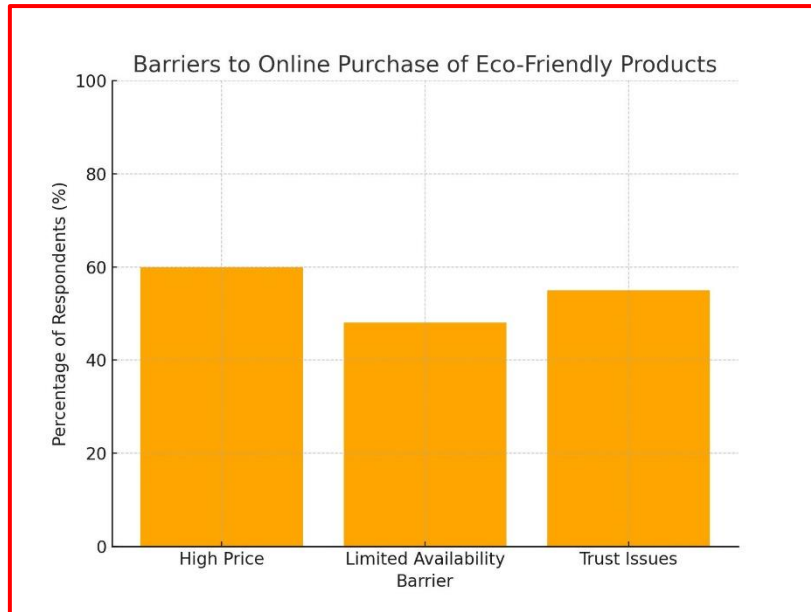
Research Methodology

- Research Design: Descriptive
- Study Area: Coimbatore
- Population: College students aged 18-25
- Sampling Method: Convenience sampling
- Sample Size: 150
- Data Collection Tool: Structured questionnaire (Google Form and physical copies)
- Data Analysis Tools: Percentage analysis, Chi-square test, ANOVA, Likert scale-based satisfaction analysis
- Variables considered: Environmental awareness, peer influence, price sensitivity, product trust, ease of access, product availability, brand loyalty.

Findings

1. **Awareness:** Over 80% of respondents are aware of eco-friendly products. However, only 40% have made online purchases.





1. Influencing Factors:

- a. Positive: Environmental concern, peer influence, social media campaigns.
- b. Negative: Price (60% said green products are more expensive), limited availability (48%), and doubt about authenticity (55%).

2. **Product Preferences:** Most popular categories include personal care, clothing, stationery, and home décor.

3. **Purchase Channels:** Amazon, Flipkart, and Instagram-based eco-brands are widely used.

4. **Satisfaction:** 62% reported satisfaction, but expressed concerns over limited choices and high delivery charges.

5. **Statistical Tests:** A significant relationship was found between environmental awareness and purchase intention (Chi-square value = 13.76, $p < 0.05$).

Suggestions

1. **Improved Product Information:** Clear labeling and detailed product descriptions can enhance trust.
2. **Affordability:** Offering student discounts or bundling eco-products at lower costs can attract more buyers.
3. **Marketing Strategies:** Use of student ambassadors and eco-influencers to promote brands.
4. **Educational Campaigns:** Colleges can organize workshops or green weeks to raise awareness.
5. **Government Incentives:** Promote startups offering eco-friendly products with tax benefits or subsidies.

Conclusion

The research reveals that college students in Coimbatore are aware and inclined toward eco-friendly online shopping. However, the transition from awareness to actual behavior is hindered by price, lack of trust, and product availability. To foster a more sustainable consumption culture, efforts must be made to bridge this gap through collaborative action involving businesses, educational institutions, and policymakers.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to Coimbatore and may not reflect behavior in other regions.
2. Responses are self-reported and may carry bias.
3. The sample size (150) may limit generalizability.
4. Only online purchases are considered; offline buying behavior is excluded.

Scope for Further Research

1. A comparative study between urban and rural youth in Tamil Nadu.
2. Analyzing the impact of social media influencers on green consumption.
3. Exploring brand loyalty and repeat purchase behavior for eco-friendly products.
4. Longitudinal studies to track behavioral shifts over time.

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