

12-24-2019

Factors Behind Dissuasion to Green Products Among Young Consumers: A Qualitative Study

Anitha Acharya Dr.

Marketing and Strategy Department, ICFAI Business School (IBS), Hyderabad, The ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education (IFHE) (Deemed to be university u/s 3 of the UGC Act 1956) Hyderabad-India, anitha_a_2000@yahoo.com

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Recommended APA Citation

Acharya, A. (2019). Factors Behind Dissuasion to Green Products Among Young Consumers: A Qualitative Study. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(12), 3197-3214. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3968>

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Abstract

The current estimated market share for green consumption is less than five percent worldwide, therefore it is very important to understand the factors that stimulate non green consumption among young consumers since this can promote environmental thinking at an early age and also to increase the demand for green products. In these circumstances, emerging countries like India have contributed very less to the consumption of green products and environmental effects. India is among the fastest growing economies in the world. With the increase in population as well as in disposable income, India is expected to see a growth in green consumption. However, that does not seem to be the case. Although, consumption of products is widely prevalent in India and has been growing steadily over the years, the same is not seen with regards to green products in particular. The present paper attempts to investigate the factors for less consumption of green products in the emerging market of India. 31 college students aged 21-25 years participated in the study. An unstructured interview technique was employed to find out the reasons for less consumption of green products among young Indian consumers. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Four main themes namely incomprehension, extortionate, limited product range and non-availability emerged out of the study. The implications of these results for policy makers are discussed at the end of the paper.

Keywords

Green Products, Thematic Analysis, Young Consumers

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Factors Behind Dissuasion to Green Products Among Young Consumers: A Qualitative Study

Anitha Acharya

IBS Hyderabad, a Constituent of IFHE, Deemed to be University, India

The current estimated market share for green consumption is less than five percent worldwide, therefore it is very important to understand the factors that stimulate non green consumption among young consumers since this can promote environmental thinking at an early age and also to increase the demand for green products. In these circumstances, emerging countries like India have contributed very less to the consumption of green products and environmental effects. India is among the fastest growing economies in the world. With the increase in population as well as in disposable income, India is expected to see a growth in green consumption. However, that does not seem to be the case. Although, consumption of products is widely prevalent in India and has been growing steadily over the years, the same is not seen with regards to green products in particular. The present paper attempts to investigate the factors for less consumption of green products in the emerging market of India. 31 college students aged 21-25 years participated in the study. An unstructured interview technique was employed to find out the reasons for less consumption of green products among young Indian consumers. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Four main themes namely incomprehension, extortionate, limited product range and non-availability emerged out of the study. The implications of these results for policy makers are discussed at the end of the paper. Keywords: Green Products, Thematic Analysis, Young Consumers

The main cause of emergence of green marketing is because of the environment and environmental related problems. As per American Marketing Association green marketing refers to marketing of products that are supposed to be environmentally safe. Thus green marketing subsumes an extensive range of activities like changes in the existing production process, transformation in how the product is packaged, and modification in the product advertisement. Green marketing is also termed as holistic marketing concept since the product and service consumption and disposition happens in a manner where there is less damage to the environment. Due to global warming and pollution customers and marketers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the need for switching into green services and products. Very few studies have addressed young consumers, especially in the context of green products (Lu et al., 2013; Smith, 2010). It is now 25 years on from the Brundtland report and also the euphoric discovery of the environment by the academics and research practitioners, still nothing has happened to green marketing in the new millennium (Petrișor & Petrișor, 2014). In the past years, we have seen new products being launched in the market (Moser, 2015); many campaigns on green marketing (Ritter, Borchardt, Vaccaro, Pereira, & Almeida, 2015); many papers were presented in the research conference held by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The fifth Green Industry, Conference organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Government of Thailand, and United Nations Industrial

Development Organization (UNIDO) took place in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2018 (United Nations, 2018). The objective of the conference was to ensure that nations develop along a sustainable trajectory and have limited negative environmental impacts. The aim of the conference was to help stakeholders and governments devise solutions to advance sustainable development by producing green products. In spite of all the efforts green marketing has received very less attention.

In 1990s there was emergence of a green tide (Peattie & Charter, 2003; Vandermerwe & Oliff, 1990) of new products and customers. Since then the results are not the one which the companies expected (Zhang, Li, Cao, & Huang, 2018). Rather customers have been disenchanted. Many companies had to stop production of green products since their green products did not do well in the market (Long, 2016) For instance American company Clorox which is based in Oakland, California introduced green works, a line of cleaning products in 2008. The products were not well accepted by the consumers since they felt that the price of the product was too high. Companies are taking lot of precautions before they launch any campaigns based on environment for fear of being implicated of green washing (De Jong, Harkink, & Barth, 2018; Schmuck, Matthes, & Naderer, 2018).

The results of the recent study by Nielsen Global (2015) on consumers' sustainability behaviour across 60 countries revealed that about 64 per cent of Indians are apprehensive about environmental issues; the report also revealed that most of the respondents were not willing to change their buying behavior. Therefore, the Indian Government in the Union budget 2019 (Mazumdar, 2019) has introduced several initiatives to encourage sustainability behaviour among the Indian citizens by means of encouraging them to buy green products. For instance, the citizens of Indian can avail tax benefit of Indian rupees one lakh fifty thousand if they invest in electric vehicles.

In the context of India, young consumers also known as the millennials refer to individuals who are below 30 years of age (Muneer, 2018) a segment of the Indian society, which represents the future of the country. By 2022, millennials will number over 450 million in India. They will play a prominent role in the economic growth of the country, when they enter the workforce. They will occupy more than 47% of India's workforce in the next few years. Globally, too, millennials have become the biggest and accounts for more than 28% of the 7.4 billion population (Muneer, 2018). The millennials are allegedly more concerned about the environment. They might be influenced by their parents and friends about the importance of buying consumption (Muneer, 2018). The young consumers are able to strengthen the importance of recycling wastes, which may likely have blemish effects on the environment (Suki, 2013). However, other studies have indicated that the intensity of green purchasing is not promising among Indian younger consumers, particularly, the millennials (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). Joshi and Rahman (2015) reviewed empirical articles on green purchase behavior for the past fifteen years. The results revealed that only twenty per cent had the experience of buying green products. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a low level of awareness about green products purchasing behaviour among young consumers in India. In spite of the mounting concern for the environment, the exact factors for the low level of consumers' acceptance of green products are yet to be fully elucidated. The researcher wanted to know why young consumers who understand the gravity of environmental issues, their attitudes do not inevitably lead to green purchasing even though they have lot of personal benefits. The other motivation for the present study is to identify the factors for non-consumption of green products even though there is increased emphasis on production and consumption of green products due to pollution and depletion of natural resources.

This poses the question as to even after taking lot of precautions by companies to manufacture and sell green products why there is less adoption of green products among

young consumers (Groening, Sarkis, & Zhu, 2018; Tully & Winer, 2014). In particular, the objective of this research is to better understand the dissuasion, leading to non-green consumption with the aim of helping marketers to formulate more effective green marketing strategies. To accomplish the objective of the research, a qualitative study is conducted to identify the dissuasion on the adoption of green products among young consumers. Young consumers are those who are in the age bracket of 18 to 25 years of age (Muralidharan & Xue, 2016).

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: The next section gives a brief review of literature. Detailed methodology used to collect and analyze the data follows. The section after that comprises findings. Finally, theoretical contributions, practical implications, and direction for future research are provided.

Literature Review

Green Marketing

A majority of the individuals are of the belief that green marketing means advertising and promotion of products which has environmental characteristics. Common terms like refillable, environmentally friendly, products free of phosphate, products which can be recycled are associated with green marketing. In reality green marketing is a much broader idea which can be applied to services also (Ingram & Durst 1989). A broad range of activities like product modification, changes in product packaging, modification in advertising can also be incorporated in green marketing. Defining green marketing is a complex task. Indeed, the terminology used in this area has varied, it includes: Green Marketing, Environmental Marketing and Ecological Marketing. Green marketing can be traced back to the early 1970s. The term green marketing became more prominent in the 1970s. During 1990s, academicians discussed the many different aspects of green marketing and came to the conclusion that more research was needed on consumer needs (Yazdanifard, & Mercy, 2011). Nevertheless, in the late 1980s and early 1990s green marketing literature focus was more on the size of the green market and the profile of the green consumer (Yazdanifard, & Mercy, 2011). Prior study also focused more on the characteristics of green consumers. According to Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, Sinkovics, and Bohlen (2003), who carried out a meta-analysis found that there were 39 studies relating to education, 31 studies on gender, 35 with reference to age, and 21 surveys with respect to social class. Most of the survey's objective was to identify the typical demographic qualities of the green consumer. For instance, females and individuals with a relatively high education and income were identified as most likely to purchase green products (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Yao et al., 2012). However, in the plethora of research made, many incongruous views of the probable green consumer were put forward by the researchers. In a study conducted by Hughner et al., (2007) the results revealed that sixty seven percent of consumers showed an affirmative attitude towards purchases of organic food products whereas only four percent actually purchased the products. Likewise, Defra (2006) found that thirty percent of United Kingdom consumers showed their concern towards the environment, but rarely purchased green products. It is thus clear that there exists a gap between consumers' thinking and actual actions (Chen & Chai, 2010; Wheale & Hinton, 2007).

Prior researchers on consumer psychology also carried out research to find out the gap between consumers' reported attitudes and their actual buying behavior (Ginsberg & Bloom, 2004). Ajzen's (2002) Theory of Planned Behaviour model was widely used to find out the behaviour of the consumers. According to this theory, intentions towards an action are resolved by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control. Intention, in turn, may lead to

certain behavior. However, other factors can also impede in the decision-making process, with an impact on whether or not the environmentally friendly attitude will result in actual behavior (for example buying the green products). Some of the factors identified were the cost of the product, consumer's earlier habits, product alternatives and trust (Kalafatis, Pollard, East, & Tsogas, 1999).

From the viewpoint of green marketing, the explanation for less purchase of green products can be explained by the modest size of the green market segment (Ottman, 1993). According to this view, environmental awareness is one of the important factors for purchasing green products and the small increase in market shares for green products is due to the fact that there are very few people who are using green products and the consumer base is not increasing (Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Moser, 2015; Polonsky, 1994). Moreover not all product groups have green alternatives, so we cannot expect higher general market shares than a few percent as long as this segment of consumers remains limited (Muneer, 2018; Peattie, 1998; Vicente-Molina, Fernández-Sainz, & Izagirre-Olaizola, 2018; White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). It is not surprising therefore to find the argument that there is no market for green products and that consumers in general have never really cared about environmental qualities of products (Peattie & Crane, 2005). According to Peart (2010) marketers who launched green products in the 1990s did so as a response to media hype about the environment. More recently, researchers have questioned whether it is at all relevant to talk about green consumers. It is often argued that green is not a permanent character of a consumer. The context in which the purchase is made is of great importance for whether or not individuals will choose the green alternative. The same consumer may well make green purchase decisions in one situation but not in another. Green buying behavior is not determined by the characteristics of consumer alone (Ottman, Stafford, & Hartman, 2006). Instead of examining potential impediments to the successful performance of green marketing, prior literature focused on identifying why consumers purchase environmentally friendly products. For example, the effects of culture on green consumption was studied by Anderson and Cunningham (1972) and Webster (1975); socio-demographic characteristics on green consumption by (Ngobo, Legohérel, & Guéguen, 2010; Shrum, McCarty, & Lowrey 1995); the impact of personality on green consumption by Kinnear, Taylor, and Ahmed (1974). Unfortunately, the focus on the relatively small portion of the market that purchases green products and services does little to assist marketers in formulating environmentally sustainable strategies. The lack of knowledge relative to why a vast majority of consumers proclaim to be pro-environmental, yet do not purchase green products, represents a substantial gap in the literature.

Young Consumers

According to Phillips and Sternthal (1977) the age of the consumer influences their viewpoint of environmental stimuli. Along related lines, Anselmsson, Johansson, and Persson (2007) pointed that diverse viewpoints might form diverse priority preferences for several reasons, age being one of the examples. Consequently, several prior researchers are of the opinion that young people acquire status of consumer at a very young age (Neuborne & Kerwin, 1999; Pecora, 1998), thus having a significant impact on the purchasing decisions of their families and also constituting the future market for various products. In addition, this age group (15-29 years) has considerable income at their disposal and have preferences for a specific product and brand (Meyer, 2001). According to Taylor and Cosenza (2002) it is better to get the attention of the young consumers at an early stage, so that they stay loyal towards you. Nevertheless, the available evidence from prior research (Neuborne & Kerwin, 1999) suggests that the traditional marketing strategies adopted by companies have not been

accepted well by the young consumers. Accordingly, Palan and Mallalieu (2012) research on teen consumers revealed that the young consumers do not like if they are ignored by the marketer. As a result, Gil, Kwon, Good, and Johnson, (2012) and Adnan, Ahmad, and Khan (2017) highlighted the importance of investigating the youth market. Surprisingly, despite the importance of this young consumer market, there is sparse research on the consumer behavior of young people (Adnan et al., 2017; Gentina & Muratore, 2012).

Due to the change in the Indian demographic, India is considered to be the world's youngest country with 49 per cent of the Indian population below the age of 25 years and 65 per cent of the youth will be of a working age by 2020 (Adnan et al., 2017). Youths are more of a trendsetter compared to other consumer segments due to the rise of disposable income.

It is therefore important to highlight the fiscal strength of Indian youth, as it can be voluntarily converted into an ecological consumption phenomenon in the coming years. Furthermore, there are minimal studies on the environmental issues in Asian countries among young consumers (Adnan et al., 2017; Lee, 2008). As the majority of these studies were conducted in developed regions of USA and Europe, very little is known about consumers in emerging economies, such as India. According to Sharma (2013), there has been a growing consciousness among Indian consumers about the environment.

Based on the literature review, the conclusion is that most of the prior researchers focused on the green consumers and how they behaved and there is very less research carried out to find why the young consumers are not using green products. Moreover, three overlooked research areas in green marketing have been identified. Prior studies have revealed that young people are more willing to accept new ideas compared to older people and they also support environment protection at a very young age (Ottman et al., 2006). Overall, the general belief is that younger individuals are likely to be more sensitive to environmental issues but still the consumption of green products is less. Second, green marketing studies relating to India are relatively scant when compared to the Western works. Third, among those scant green marketing studies (Acharya & Gupta, 2016), young consumers, who constitute a potentially large group of supporters in environmental protection, have rarely been examined. This paper therefore attempts to fill the gap by finding out why young consumers are not buying the green products.

Methodology

Sample

The Indian consumer market will see a rapid growth in the years to come due to its new age group. The total population of the new age group aged between 15 – 29 years is 440 million (Social and Rural Research Institute, 2017). It is projected that, in 2020, the average age of an Indian will be 29 years. Normally, period from teenage years to middle age is termed as youth. Age represent the determining characteristics in the definition of Youth by various agencies. United Nations (UN) adopted the age group 15 to 24 for defining youth. The National Youth Policy (2004) defined the youth as in the age group of 15-29 years. In the present study, youth is defined as the person who is the age bracket of 15- 29 years. The absolute size of India's new age group combined with superior education have made the way for steady growth in purchasing power, making the consumer story of India one of the world's most convincing for the next 20 years. According to Goldman Sachs (2016) report, India's consumer in the coming decade will be led by its 129 million urban mass consumers. The urban youth in India have strong requirements and strong attitudes of entitlement, and majority of them have huge expectations from their future (Social and Rural Research Institute, 2017). According to KPMG (2017) report, the characteristic of India's youth is

highly experimentative, especially when it comes to personal care, food, and media. In 2014, out of a total monthly expenditure of Rs 2,014, on an average, India's youth spent Rs 385 on personal grooming, which was up by nearly 39% compared to the previous year. The youth psychography also revealed a high percentage of impulse purchase and relied more on word-of-mouth publicity. India will soon have the largest, youngest workforce ever; nearly half of the population is aged less than 24 years, and 64 per cent of Indians are of the working age (KPMG, 2017). In addition, young consumers play an important role in the family buying decision process (Ashraf & Khan, 2016). An economically empowered young population translates not only into increasing consumer demand but also into a more value-conscious demand (Australian Business Solutions Group, 2016).

Data Collection

Qualitative methods were used for data collection and analysis (Morgan, 1988). In this study we investigated the rationale for less consumption or no consumption of green products among Indian consumers. Qualitative study (Charters & Pettigrew, 2006) was adopted since the study was exploratory in nature. Since the topic is sophisticated, depth interviewing technique was adopted for data collection (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Depth interview technique was used to comprehend the complex issues that may not be immediately implicit in surface responses (Fontana & Frey, 1994). The sample comprised of people who live in New Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai, Uttar Pradesh, and Bangalore. These cities were chosen because of their rich cultural variation with respect to semantic, religion, and racial groups. The abovementioned cities are considered cosmopolitan, densely populated and are known for the urban agglomeration. About 18 informants were involved in focus groups (Morgan, 1988) and 13 took part in personal interviews. The demographic profiles of the respondents are summarized in Table 1.

The researchers selected the participants. Each participant was given a gift worth Indian National Rupees 50. Interviews were conducted over one-month period. All interviews were conducted at the time most convenient for the participants. The interviews were conducted by the authors of this paper who had expertise in the concerned area. During the interview the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was obtained to participate in the study and an explicit verbal permission was obtained before recording the interview. Ethical consideration with respect to the protection of human subjects was given due importance (Munhall, 1988), especially because of the qualitative nature of the study (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). American Psychological Association's ethical standards for qualitative research were thus maintained by the researchers (Jacoby, Smith, and Eccles, 2003), as done in previous studies (Acharya & Gupta, 2016). Informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were ensured and adhered to throughout the study. The length of the interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to one hour.

The interviews began with a few structured questions regarding interviewees' demographics, further questions like "Why sustainability is important?" were then presented to the informants (refer to list of typical questions below). These questions were intended to stimulate comments and discussion and were not in search of specific answers:

- Why clean environment is important?
- What according to you are green products?
- Have you used green products in the last three months?
- Can you give some example of green products?
- How did you come to know about green products?

By doing this, the interviewees were allowed to develop their own narrative by exploring their experiences of not using green products. The researcher allowed participants to speak for themselves (i.e., the emergent themes were participant led rather than researcher led). This allowed participants to take control of the interview process and prevented researchers' subjective bias entering the analytic stage. All participants were debriefed before and after the study. To ensure trustworthiness, all four components of trustworthiness were verified. Confirmability and dependability were ensured by maintaining detailed records of the process and they were audited by an observer not connected with the study (Morrow, 2005).

Data Analysis

The authors of this paper also acknowledge Sandberg and Alvesson's (2011) call for more scrutiny on how research questions are developed from existing literature. They clearly stress that "ways of constructing research questions from existing literature are likely to facilitate the development of interesting and significant theories" (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011, p. 24). Review of the literature can be either inductive or deductive. The current study is inductive as the objective of the study was to find out the reasons for not using the green products. For an inductive inquiry thematic analysis is appropriate as it guides future research (Boyatzis, 1998). In other words, in case of thematic research, there is few pre-conceptions by the researchers towards the targeted research domain. In thematic analysis the study under investigation are sorted into different clusters where it is grouped with similar theories, empirical areas and concepts. The above process helps in the emergence of different themes and the researchers can gain insights about how the focal field is planned and how it is mounting.

An added drive for a thematic review is that researchers who study the same phenomenon may lack shared theoretical concepts and frameworks, which may craft complications in interpreting the results of related studies accurately. Researchers may consequently resist in building on past research to make incremental advancement in the development of theories. A thematic review can help recognize and clarify inconsistencies, at the same time challenging scholars to address issues in different ways. Hence, this review intends to account for current knowledge in the field, which can form a basis for the building of novel theory and models (Weick, 1995).

Thematic analysis was used to determine, interpret, and report themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We followed the methodology as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and engaged in regular analysis of data along with the collection of subsequent data. The researcher continued to access new informants till theoretical saturation was reached.

The interpretation began with the researchers transcribing the interviews and engaging in active and repeated reading the transcriptions set to familiarize themselves with the data sets (transcribed interviews). All significant lines corresponding to the research question were identified and summarized in participants' own words. The summaries were then explored for finding descriptions across interviews which express similar meanings. Such descriptions were tagged using a concise code name which represents the synopsis of the description. The authors have used QDA Miner software for this purpose. Since we used inductive thematic analysis, naming of codes depended on what transpired from the data.

After coding of all significant lines, the entire data sets were reviewed for the second time to ensure that there is no plausible omissions and misinterpretations. The coded data extracts were then reviewed to consider whether they formed logical patterns. Codes that were homogeneous with respect to context of information conveyed were grouped into potential themes, and the relevant coded data extracts were gathered within the identified

themes so as to define the themes. Accordingly, themes were defined and further refined. This process resulted in generation of four themes corresponding to not using green products.

The framework for reliability and validity was based on work by Whittemore et al. (2001), wherein the reliability of this research was strengthened by documenting the stages of analysis and the agreement between the researchers about data interpretation that had been previously analyzed independently. Member check was carried out to validate the findings. The findings are presented below.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the respondent (n = 31)

Characteristic	Subgroup	Frequency
Age	1. 20 - 22	15
	2. 23 – 25	16
Gender	1. Male	14
	2. Female	17
Educational Qualification	Graduate	10
	Post Graduate	18
	Doctorate	3
Religion	1. Hinduism	15
	2. Islam	4
	3. Jainism	2
	4. Christianity	6
	5. Sikhism	4
Family Income	Less than 5 Lakhs	3
	5 Lakhs to 10 Lakhs	8
	10 Lakhs to 15 Lakhs	14
	Above 15 Lakhs	6
City	1. Hyderabad	3
	2. Bangalore	4
	3. Mumbai	7
	4. New Delhi	10
	5. Uttar Pradesh	5
	6. Chennai	2

Findings

The reasons for sparing or non-consumption of green products were identified from the combined analysis of these interviews. Four broad themes emerged from the interview transcriptions, which are discussed below.

Theme 1: Incomprehension

This theme came out as a predominant theme behind the non-usage of green products (n = 15; 10 male, 5 female). Most of the respondents did not know that there was something like green products. Most of the young consumers did not know about green products due to which they were not in a position to buy the products. Codes such as grasp, information, perception, and apprehension emerged from statements, a few of which are presented below. These codes were integrated to make two potential themes, namely, knowledge and awareness (Figure 1).

“What do you mean by green products, can you give us some example?”
 (Respondent 12; Gender: male; age 23).
 “Environmental products? What do you mean by that?” (Respondent 7;
 Gender: female; age 20).

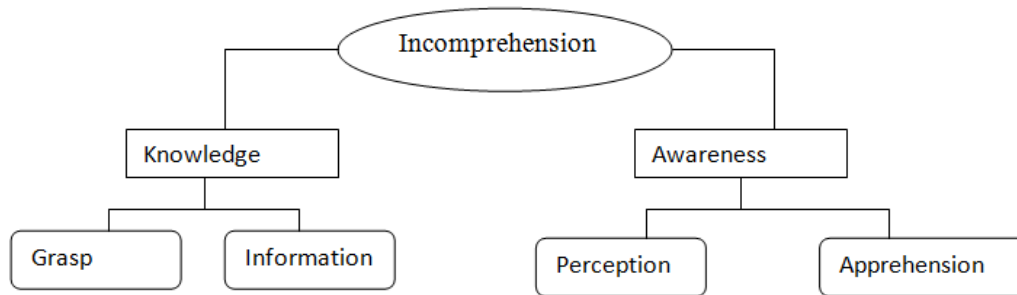
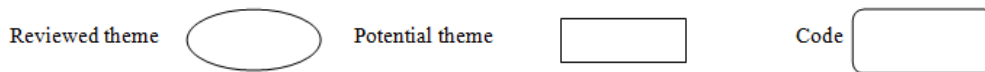


Figure 1



Theme 2: Extortionate

Most of the female respondents felt that green products were very expensive (n = 9; 3 male, 6 female). Most of the respondents who were aware of green products did not use it since they found it to be expensive. Codes such as costly, value for money, quantity, inflated emerged from statements, a few of which are presented below. These codes were integrated to make two potential themes; namely, exorbitant and unreasonable (Figure 2).

“I visited Vedentika store with my friend, I was testing some of their face creams, They were very nice, but when I checked their price I was shocked, They were charging a bomb for a 100 ml size of face cream, for the same price I can buy more quantity of Ponds face cream or other creams you see”
 (Respondent 2; Gender: female; age: 25).

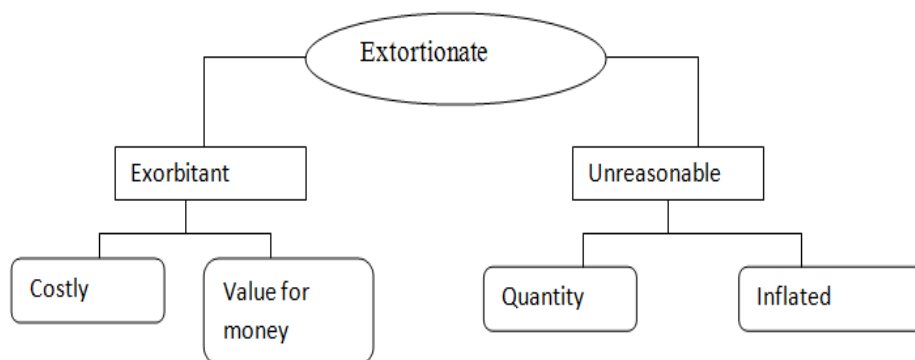


Figure 2

Theme 3: Non- Availability

Respondents who were residing in Mumbai and Bangalore were of the opinion that green products were not easily available (n = 5; 2 male, 3 female). Most of the respondents

who were interested in using green products felt that they were not easily available at their locality. They had to wait for a long time to get fresh stocks. Codes such as delay, hold time, not easily available, and ease of access emerged from statements, a few of which are presented below. These codes were integrated to make two potential themes; namely, waiting time and accessibility (Figure 3).

“I usually buy my green products from Organic store which is 5 kilometers from my residence, I like their bathing soap, sometimes I have to wait for more than 45 days to get the product” (Respondent 10; Gender: female; age: 25).

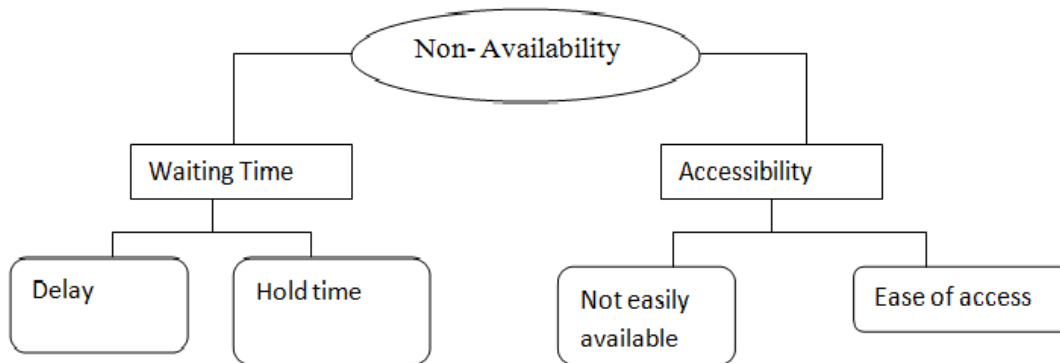


Figure 3

Theme 4: Product Range is Limited

Respondents who were residing in Hyderabad were of the opinion that the range of green products are limited in number (n = 6; 2 male, 4 female). Most of the respondents who were interested in using green products felt that the range or variety of green products are limited in number and that they don't have much choice. Codes such as alternative, switch, reduce and slight emerged from statements, a few of which are presented below. These codes were integrated to make two potential themes; namely, substitutes and narrow (Figure 4).

“I don't use green products because they don't have many varieties. The choices are limited. I have to buy whatever is available, which I don't like.” (Respondent 15; Gender: female; age: 22).

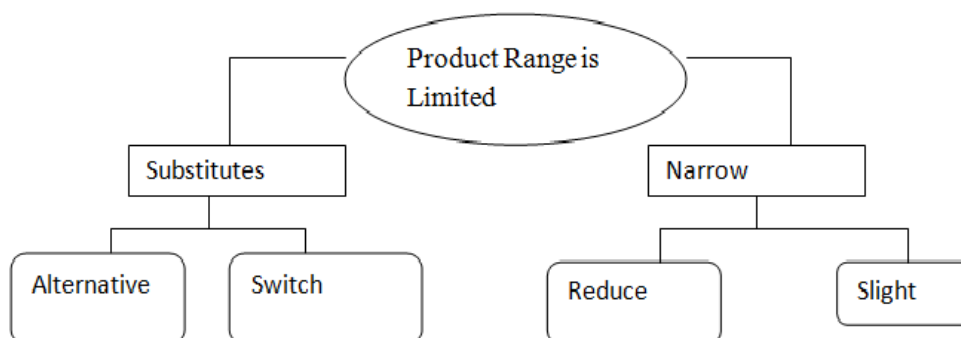


Figure 4

Discussion

Instead of looking at these themes as challenges for green products marketing in India, they can be posited as opportunities to tap this relatively “blue ocean” market. Following paragraphs detail possible marketing strategies which marketers could adopt to improve consumption of green products in Indian market. The strategies proposed are based on the themes obtained. The paper uncovered that many Indians are not formally introduced to green products. If marketers develop appropriate promotional campaigns by offering free trials to prospective consumers during special occasions such as during farewell party or fresher’s party, awareness about green products may be considerably enhanced. Promotional programs could also be used by the firms. Merely communicating information is not a promising approach in this context, as product-related knowledge and beliefs are prerequisite of attitude (Ha & Janda, 2012, 2017). Promotional efforts should emphasize social norms (Jansson Marell, & Nordlund, 2010), address environmental concerns (Bamberg, 2003), and raise problem awareness (Bamberg & Möser, 2007). By creating a convincing product image which focuses on the value of the product and its tangible benefits for the environment, others and oneself, consumers learn to value the green product, which finally leads to green consumption patterns. For consumers who are price-conscious firms can use personal appeals like nutrition or health claims (Aschemann-Witzel, Maroscheck, & Hamm, 2013).

The study reveals that incomprehension about green products is one important factor. This theme is about lack of awareness of green products. Most of the consumers are not aware of green products and the effort which is required to evaluate green product substitutes along with risk associated with failure of green products. Prior research also suggests that consumer decision-making is largely inclined by the attitudes of family and friends (Childers & Rao 1992).

Extortionate refers to product which are very expensive. There are many things which influence consumer’s decision making; the major influence could be the cost of the product (Osterhus 1997). Price is not the only factor which influences consumers. The effort and time which are required to evaluate and search for products are also the part of the cost of consumption. In order to ensure that the consumers buy green product, the benefit to cost ratio must be greater than that of alternatives. Thus, theory and prior research suggests that if consumers feel that green products are extortionate, then, green consumption is impeded. Since green products are more extortionate in comparison to traditional products (Kavilanz 2008), it is likely that price deters many non-green consumers. To induce greener purchasing behavior among young consumers, firms should review their pricing strategies on a regular basis. Offering green products at a reduced price might encourage young consumers to buy green products instead of traditional products. Bezawada and Pauwels (2013) study revealed that lowering prices of green product is an effective tool for prompting consumers to buy green. Regular price reductions are more effective for perishable products which has high purchase frequency for example meat and dairy products. For non-perishable products the discounts rates should be higher (Bezawada & Pauwels, 2013). While pricing green products firms should consider both environmental and economic cost of the product and also provide value for customers and ensure that the firms also make some profit. Non-Availability refers to green products which are not easily available in the market. Green products are not readily available and visible in the shops. Most of the participants didn’t know from where they can purchase the green products.

Product Range is Limited refers to less choice for consumers to choose the product. Majority of products don’t have green substitutes. The results were surprising that in India there were not many substitutes for green products in metropolitan cities. Even if consumers wanted to buy green products because of limited range and fewer options they were forced to

buy alternative products. The retailers did not stock much products and even consumers were willing to wait for few days to get the green products the retailer was not in a position to deliver it to them

It is unique, being the first qualitative research of its kind conducted in India. An unstructured interview was employed to find out the reasons for less consumption of green products among the Indian young consumers. The results of this study identified four themes or possible reason factors related to low consumption of green products. Though the study was of exploratory kind, it is anticipated that the deterrent factors identified can be applicable in the context of other emerging green markets to a varying extent.

Implications

Based on the results of the study, marketing strategies aimed at improving green consumption are proposed by the researcher. These suggestions are resultant based on the themes derived from the exploratory study. It is posited that the strategies proposed will enable the marketers to improve awareness and recognition about green brands, enhance the relevance and perception of green brands and enable appropriately positioning green brands in Indian market.

This research points out that green products is low in functional value because it is considered to be expensive. The results infer that targeting green products to veteran consumers is not an appropriate choice. They have to target the young consumers at an early age so that they will continue to buy the product for longer time. Marketers can sponsor special events which are cost effective and can target those socioeconomic groups that can afford green products.

While the impediment leading to non-green consumption are noted, personal choice and concern for environment appear to be factors that lead to the adoption of green products. Personal choices are mainly due to the awareness of the environment for example environmental degradation and attributions of personal responsibility (Schwartz, 1977). Consumers need to be educated of the benefits they have on the environment when using green products. Mere statistical report is not enough. Drawing interest to, and showing how, individual green consumption makes a difference is one of the means of helping individuals to encourage green consumption.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study provides some insights into the factors that may dissuade or encourage consumption of green products among young consumers. Nevertheless, as with any study, this research is subject to certain limitations. First, research was on the context of dissuasion of green products, future research can take a contrasting approach and focus on investigating what kind of Indian consumers prefer to use green products and what motivates them to buy green products. Such research will give a more comprehensive insight about Indian green consumers' consumption behavior and it will enable the marketers to devise more effective green marketing strategies. Second, a convenience sample of college students was used in this study and the only screening factor to qualify them as young consumers was their age. Therefore, the findings are not generalizable to the entire young population. Third, this research is a snapshot in time of a dynamic phenomenon. Longitudinal data could provide additional insights into cultural and the interpersonal dynamics and characteristics of users' life-worlds regarding this particular phenomenon. To broaden the research context into a cross-cultural environment, future research may compare differences and similarities regarding this specific phenomenon in different cultural areas and countries.

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Author Note

Anitha is an Assistant Professor at IBS Hyderabad. Prior to her academic career, Anitha worked in banking and insurance sector for 12 years. Anitha's work has been published in leading international journals such as *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*, *The Qualitative Report*, and *International Food Research Journal*. Her research focuses primarily on marketing of services, brand personality, branding, and green products. Her expertise lies in the application of Structural Equation Modeling and Multivariate Techniques in addressing marketing research problems. Her research interests include brand personality, brand image, services marketing, and branding. Anitha has contributed book chapters on green marketing, green personality, and qualitative techniques with Apple Academic Press and IGI Global respectively. She has reviewed articles in *Journal of Global Operations and Strategic Outsourcing*, *Journal of Youth Studies*, *Journal of Indian Business Research*, *Journal of Global Operations and Strategic Sourcing*, *The Case Journal*, and *Journal of Strategic Contracting and Negotiation*. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: anitha_a_2000@yahoo.com.

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Article Citation

Acharya, A. (2019). Factors behind dissuasion to green products among young consumers: A qualitative study. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(11), 3197-3214. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol24/iss12/16>
