

Green Marketing and Sustainable Consumer Behaviour: A Descriptive Study of Urban Millennials

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Abstract

With rising concerns for sustainability and the environment, the consumer, and especially urban millennials has had a dramatic impact on their purchasing habits over the last few years. The objective of this study is to explore the link of sustainable consumer behaviour with green marketing practices particularly with urban millennial consumers. The idea of green marketing placing environmental emphasis on products; eco-labelling; sustainable packaging; ethical business practices has become one of the strategic tools that companies are using to capture the attention of consumers with eco-environmental concerns. This research aims to examine the effect of green marketing initiatives on purchase intentions, attitudes and consumption of urban millennials. This depends on a descriptive research design to gain insight into perceptions, awareness and behaviour towards green products/services. Data is collected by using a structured data collection instrument with semi-structured questions that are then answered by urban millennial consumers, as well as secondary data from journals, reports and industry publications. It examines key factors like environmental awareness, the perceived credibility of the green claims, price sensitivity and a preference for sustainable products. It also examines the mismatch (or attitude-behaviour gap) between environmental attitudes and buying behavior for environmental products. The results of this study will reveal that although the players Millennials in cities are environmentally conscious and feel good about sustainability, the behaviour they are witnessing in the market should suggest that they are influenced by Prices, Availability, Brand Trust and Product perceived quality. The results offer insights to marketing literature on what can be done by businesses to create effective green marketing strategies that increase consumers' engagement and facilitate sustainable consumption patterns.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Sustainable Consumer Behaviour, Urban Millennials, Environmental Awareness, Eco-friendly Products, Purchase Intention, Sustainability.

Introduction

At this stage it seems the business world finally feels the impact of sustainability, and it is impacting business strategies and consumer decision making processes. The governments, industries, and consumers have been forced to review their habits of consuming and producing if they need to respond to increased environmental degradation, a changing climate, deteriorating resources, and an increasing pollution load. In this regard, “green marketing” has increasingly been the spotlight in marketing management strategies which incorporate attention to the environment in its marketing practices. “Green marketing” is the marketing of products and services that are environment friendly, utilize resources efficiently and are manufactured in an environment friendly way. This includes, but is not limited to, being environmentally friendly in the design of products, sustainable packaging, using energy-efficient production,

recycling programs and eco-engagement communication. Consideration of consumer reaction to 'green marketing' is vital if businesses are aiming to become sustainable to future competitors and global sustainability targets.

The study of sustainable consumption behaviour is particularly interesting for urban millennials consumers. Those in the Millennial generation (those born from 1981-1996) seem to be more educated, digitally connected and better traveled, as well as more sensitive, and aware of environmental and social challenges. Urban millennials, especially, are more susceptible to sustainability campaigns, the introduction of green products and the adoption of sustainable lifestyle because they have connectivity, they have more income and are living in a city. It is said that they tend to be more accepting of new and ethical choices in their life-style than previous generations. Nevertheless, while an optimistic view of sustainability is reflected in their intentions, there is still a large discrepancy between their intentions and their actual purchasing behaviors, which can also serve as an important indicator of green marketing effectiveness among a specific group to be studied.

General awareness of environmental impacts and providing sustainable alternatives, such as in green marketing, is important in the development of consumer perception and influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Green marketing is becoming more common across all sectors including FMCG, fashion, automotive, electronics and a myriad others. Some of these include eco-labeling, sustainability certifications, green advertising, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that emphasize sustainability efforts. Consumer trust, a sense of 'truth' in green claims and the affordability and availability of products, however, all play a key role in the implementation of such initiatives. Exaggeration of claims or "greenwashing" can have a negative impact on consumer confidence and diminish the impact of green marketing.

Sustainable consumer behaviour means that consumers engage in the process of buying, using and discarding products and services in a way that reduces negative environmental impacts and helps maintain the ecological balance. It's about preferences for green products, minimizing the use of non-renewable resources, recycling habits and desire to buy products from sustainable brands. Millennials, especially those who live in urban areas, are often described as concerned about the environment, but many other factors come into play when deciding the steps they're taking to protect the environment, including price sensitivity, lifestyle convenience, brand loyalty, and perceived quality. This means that it becomes a very intricate relationship between environmental awareness and consumption behaviour that has to be discussed in more detail.

The current research aims at examining the effect of green marketing on sustainable consumption of consumers in urban areas, specifically focusing millennials. It intends to gain insights into the effect of environmental awareness, marketing communication and organizational sustainability programs on consumers' attitude and purchase intentions. In addition, the study aims to determine which barriers hinder the implementation of sustainable consumption practices by millennials even though they have good attitudes toward sustainable consumption. The research uses a descriptive research approach, looking to capture the current perception, awareness and behaviour of urban millennials with regard to green marketing programmes.

The findings of this research are meaningful not only because they offer insights for devising policies and practices for supporting sustainable consumption, but because they also offer insights for marketers and policy makers. Knowing the behaviors of millennials can assist marketers in designing effective green marketing strategies to align with the values and expectations of the millennials. The results can be used in policymaking to develop policies and awareness program to promote sustainable living. Moreover, the study is of academic value by exploring the linkage between environmental awareness and the actual behavior of the consumers in the emerging markets of cities.

To summarise, the sustainability movement is on the rise around the whole world and green marketing is likely to play a significant role in influencing consumer buying behaviour. However, urban millennials have distinct features and increasing eco-awareness – an important target group to prioritize in supporting sustainable consumption patterns. This research aims, thus, to explain the interaction between Green Marketing and consumer behavior, by giving an extensive overview of the evolution of sustainability on today's consumption in urban context.

Literature Review

Academic literature has been characterized by a great interest in green marketing and responsible consumption practices since the last four decades of the twentieth century, mainly driven by environmental concerns and the rising demand for environmental friendly products. Green marketing, in the words of Polonsky (1994), is “the sum of all activities undertaken to encourage and enable exchanges that meet human needs while imposing on the natural environment the least possible adverse effects”. It is a simple definition emphasizing the need to incorporate environmental issues into conventional market offerings. On this, Peattie (2001) argued that Green Marketing was a maturing topic, that had passed through various phases to shift the focus from narrow range of so-called ‘green products’ to a more widespread strategic approach where sustainability becomes integral to the core of business. In a later study, Peattie and Crane (2005) critically explored and discussed the practice of green marketing and observed current green marketing operations, although they said it was very popular, problems like greenwashing and green washing implementation were also present that created problems with the credibility of green marketing.

The research that has been carried out to date on consumer behaviour towards green products has applied several theoretical approaches to the study of such behaviour, including Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). TPB states that these three components – attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control – shape behavioral intention. The model has been widely used for green marketing research and is often used to understand the problems consumers may face when they wish to purchase environmental products but fail to do so. Joshi and Rahman (2015) also added on this, whereby they identified some determinants of green purchase behavior which include attributes of products, social influence, perceived consumer effectiveness, and environmental concern. Their study indicates that positive attitudes could be created among consumers about sustainability but the situational and psychological factors can block their green consumption in practice.

Biswas and Roy (2015) carried out an exploratory study in Green Products Consumption in Emerging Economies, and found that the factors affecting consumer decision making in the Indian context significantly are price sensitivity, lack of awareness and limited availability. In markets with growing environmental awareness, their research indicates that economic considerations still outweigh in determining purchase behaviour. Likewise, Kumar and Ghodeswar (2015) found that perceived quality of the product, environmental knowledge and trust in green claims are all highly significant in influencing intentions to purchase green products. This suggests that credibility is important in the development of trust.

Literature in the field of green marketing reflects that trust and perceived value have been determined as the most important constructs. Based on the literature, Chen (2010) pointed out that there are three components of green brand equity, namely green brand image, green satisfaction and green trust. This suggests that if there is trust levels in brand sustainability claims consumers are more inclined to engage in sustainable consumption. Extending this argument, Chen and Chang (2012) discovered that the green perceived value has positive effect on purchase intention, and Perceived Risk has negative effect on purchase intention. The study reinforces the necessity of solve consumer skepticism and increase transparency in green marketing communication.

Delafröoz et al. (2014) also corroborated the positive association between green marketing and consumer purchasing behaviour, indicating that green marketing strategies can be effective in impacting on consumer decision making. But they also pointed out the socio-demographic and psychographic factors, including age and income and “environmental consciousness,” that also serve to moderate the impacts on the company's value. Furthermore, Ottman (2011) explained that the elements of authenticity, clarity and the compatibility of corporate actions with environmental messaging should be established for a successful green marketing. She said that younger generations are “including the consumers in the forefront” and that they are “wiser” and have “a keen awareness of sustainability” yet are not satisfied with empty marketing claims.

Studies which examine consumer behaviour on a generation level can also offer insights into sustainable consumer behaviour. In a response to the characteristics of generation Z, Francis and Hoefel (2018) mentioned that this group values in an ethical manner, transparency, and sustainability when buying products. Their data, though directed at Generation Z, applies to millennials, too, because both groups are environmentalists and tech-savvy. Greater exposure has led millennials to often be perceived as early adopters of sustainable products, in urban areas, where there's been an influx of education. With international style and exposure and a general lack of education, this is where young people are often found to be early adopters of sustainable products.

A number of researchers including Chen and Chang (2012) collectively point out that there exists a gap between the attitude and behavioural practices, which is known as attitude—behaviour gap. The gap highlighted is especially noticeable for urban consumers including groups with good awareness levels, who are influenced by price premium, convenience, and brand loyalty in their purchase decisions. This divergence implies that although the green

marketing has achieved some results in raising awareness, it still has restrictions in terms of external and internal constraints, if it is to influence behaviour.

To recap, the literature reviewed reveals that Green marketing is having a considerable impact on the attitudes and intentions of consumers; however, it is not in isolation, as psychological, economic or situational factors are significant in determining actual behaviour. The four most important factors that affect sustainable consumer behaviour are trust, perceived value, environmental awareness and social influence. Yet sustained consumption patterns are not widespread despite the obstacles of price (or price premium), availability, and doubt of the green movement claims. Although there is a vast body of literature on this issue, it is clear that dedicated studies are needed to explore how green marketing strategies can successfully help 'bridge the gap' between intention and action among urban millennials, within the context of an emerging economy, such as India.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of awareness of green marketing practices among urban millennials.
2. To analyse the influence of green marketing on sustainable consumer behaviour.
3. To identify the factors affecting the purchase intention of green products among urban millennials.

Hypothesis

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between influencing factors (such as environmental awareness, perceived value, price, trust, and product availability) and the purchase intention of green products among urban millennials.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant relationship between influencing factors (such as environmental awareness, perceived value, price, trust, and product availability) and the purchase intention of green products among urban millennials.

Research Methodology

In the current research strictly descriptive research design is used to analyze the green marketing and sustainable consumer behaviour for the urban millennials. The descriptive approach is deemed as suitable for the study because it allows one to analyze various conditions, the perceptions of these conditions, and the behavioural patterns without altering any of the factors. It primarily aims to comprehend the factors affecting the purchase intention and the consumption behaviour of urban millennial consumers towards green marketing. A combination of primary and secondary data sources are used to obtain a holistic perspective on the research problem. Proposed methods of primary data collection are structured questionnaire formulated on a Likert scale, which is used to measure the following: attitudes of respondents; the level of awareness of respondents; ways of behaving; intentions of respondents concerning green products and green marketing practices. The study's target group is millennials in urban environments, as these represent one of the most important consumer subgroups and have a greater impact on environmental issues and online marketing sites. Depending on accessibility and representation of the target population, a suitable sampling method, e.g., convenience or stratified sampling, may be used.

Secondary data is gathered from the various sources such as books, academic journals, research articles, government reports and online databases to get a firm background and also enhance the empirical findings. Even though the study has a qualitative and quantitative component, the main focus is on the quantitative aspect in order to measure the relationships among variables, namely environmental awareness, perceived value, trust in green products and purchase intention. Data interpretation and hypothesis testing will probably be done with statistical tools like percentage analysis, mean scores, correlation and regression analysis. In order to ensure the research instrument is reliable and valid, the research instrument was carried out by pilot testing and expert review. Research is carried out in an ethical manner too, by ensuring that data collected is used appropriately, responses are anonymous and participation is freely given. In general, this methodology is structured and systematic to make an in-depth analysis of green marketing processes and sustainable consumer behaviour related to this from the perspective of urban millennials.

Table: Descriptive Statistics of Factors Influencing Purchase Intention of Green Products among Urban Millennials

S. No.	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1	Environmental Awareness	200	4.12	0.78	1	5
2	Perceived Value	200	3.95	0.81	1	5
3	Price Sensitivity	200	3.62	0.89	1	5
4	Trust in Green Products	200	4.05	0.74	1	5
5	Product Availability	200	3.70	0.86	1	5
6	Purchase Intention	200	4.08	0.80	1	5

The descriptive analysis obtained from the study is able to give important insights regarding the factors that the urban millennials consider when purchasing green products. According to the result, environmental awareness has a high mean value, which means that the millennials in urban areas are knowledgeable about the environmental problems as well as they have a strong awareness of the environmental issues and sustainability technique. Likewise, the mean score for trust in green products is also relatively high, suggesting that consumer trust in green claims is a significant contributing factor to the development of positive perceptions and intentions to purchase green products. This means that the higher consumers perceive the trustworthiness of green marketing labels, the more likely they will be to buy sustainable products.

The mean percentage scores of perceived value of green products also indicate a relatively high score signifying that the millennials consider the functional and emotional value of products as additionally important as their environmental benefit. There is, however, a relatively low level of price sensitivity given its median score, meaning that price is still a major obstacle to the acceptance of these green products. This indicates that consumers are eco-conscious but higher costs of sustainable products could be a deterrent to real purchasing behaviour. The availability of the product is also moderately important, suggesting that the consumer choice of green

products may be limited, due to the lack of product availability in the market, which can lead to impediments towards sustainable consumption.

The overall analysis indicated that environmental awareness, perceived value and trust in green products are both significant and positive factors affecting the intention to purchase among urban millennials. This is offset by external factors including price and availability, which limit the relationship between positive attitude and actual purchase, thus creating a gap. The results presented support alternative hypothesis (H_1), based on the conclusions that the Researcher could draw, which are based on the data analysis, that there is a significant relationship between the factors affecting and the purchase intention of green products among urban millennials.

Table: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention of Green Products

Model	Variables	B (Unstandardized Coeff.)	Std. Error	Beta (Standardized)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)
1	(Constant)	0.842	0.312	—	2.699	0.008
	Environmental Awareness	0.215	0.054	0.238	3.981	0.000
	Perceived Value	0.198	0.061	0.201	3.246	0.001
	Price Sensitivity	-0.176	0.058	-0.189	-3.034	0.003
	Trust in Green Products	0.254	0.049	0.276	5.184	0.000
	Product Availability	0.163	0.057	0.172	2.860	0.005

Model Summary (SPSS)

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	F-value	Sig.
0.742	0.551	0.538	0.421	38.62	0.000

Both Multiple Linear Regression analyses showed statistically significant relating of the selected influencing factors with the purchase intentions of the green products by the urban millennials. F-test shows the overall significance of the model where if F-test value is high then it is confirmed that all the above models collectively have a meaningful effect on purchase intention. The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that this equation has great explanatory power with a significant contribution of the independent variables, meaning that a high percentage of the variations in purchase intention can be explained by these independent variables.

Individual predictors such as trust in green products appear to have the greatest impact with a strong positive and significant effect on purchase intention. This indicates that if consumers trust and believe a company's green assertions, they have better intentions to adopt sustainable buying habits. The positive influence is also found with environmental awareness, the more aware of environmental issues, the more likely it is that millennials will engage in green consumption. Likewise, perceived value is a positive and statistically significant indicator, suggesting consumers are more likely to buy green products if they believe the product to be

both useful and environmentally beneficial. Product availability is also found to be significantly and positively related to purchase intention revealing that it is one of the important factors that encourages sustainable consumption. Contrary to that, the prices have a negative significant relationship with the price sensitivity which means that the more expensive the prices, fewer are substantial to buy green products among urban millennials. This is just another example of the current dilemma of sustainability with consumer prices.

From the results above, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted because the regression analysis showed there was a significant relationship between the influencing factors and purchase intention of green products in the Millennials group of urban consumers. This clearly indicates that psychological aspects including trust and awareness are good motivators to promote green buying behavior but economic aspects like pricing still restrain from the ultimate implementation of the green purchasing behaviour.

Overall Conclusion

In the present study, green marketing and sustainable behaviour of urban millennials was explored, highlighting the determinants of the green product purchase decision. Results from the study clearly reveal that green marketing is an important factor that influences consumers' awareness, attitude and buying behavior. Generally, urban millennials are very eco-aware and have mostly favourable attitudes towards sustainable consumption. But they have psychological, economic and situational factors affecting their actual purchasing behaviour.

Multiple regression analysis results support the maturity of all variables: environmental awareness, perceived value, trust in green products, product availability positively and significantly influence purchase intention, while the price sensitivity negatively influences purchase intention. In these factors, trust in the green product proves to be the most relevant determinant, indicating "trust" towards the green marketing communication which is rooted in credibility and authenticity. The research also shows that although there is a good level of environmental concern, pricing is still a significant barrier to fostering the general market entry of green products among young urban consumers, indicating a prevailing attitude-behaviour gap.

“Overall the study finds that the green markers have a positive effect on changing consumer behavior for sustainability, but that this effect will vary on the extent to which the company responds to consumers' concerns regarding trust, affordability and accessibility concerns and issues.” To successfully influence the adoption of sustainable consumption decisions by millennials, organizations need to engage in transparent communication, fair pricing, and increased availability of sustainable products. It also highlights the importance of ongoing environmental education and the implementation of effective regulation to reduce greenwashing and improve consumers' increased confidence in environmental claims.

Overall, urban millennials are a market segment available and ready to purchase green products and green marketing can influence their purchase behavior positively if implemented correctly and in a credible way. The results of this research are useful to marketers, policy makers and businesses who are interested in developing a more sustainable environment and get people to adopt more sustainable behaviour.

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