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Sudhadhara K Samal

Assistant Professor, Prof. V. B.

Shah Institute of

Management, Amroli, Surat,

Gujarat, India

The Influence of Eco-labelled products on consumer buying behaviour in Surat city

Sudhadhara K Samal

Abstract

Over the past three decades the environmental concerns has increased. Therefore ecological issue is very important and very much discussed nowadays. There are lot of discussions on different levels about greenhouse effect, environment pollution and its effect on peoples' health, how people can stop all the bad consequences caused by the rapid growth of industrial pollution and human impact on the nature. Companies started to use environmental strategies and produce environment-friendly products, which are supposed to be good for humans, nature and companies 'own reputation in the market, although ecological products market share is not that big. This research has provided empirical views on the influence of Eco- labeled Products on consumer buying behaviour. This survey is conducted in Surat city as per the convenience of the researcher. This paper seeks to reveal and analyze the level of knowledge that the consumers have towards eco-labeled products and factors affecting their behaviour towards the same. Here researcher also tried to survey the viewpoint of consumers about willingness to pay extra price for Eco-labeled products. It will be beneficial to those marketers who make themselves ready to launch their products with concept of green (Environmental safe) or Eco-labeled products.

Keywords: Green marketing, eco-labeled products, green packaging, premium price, consumer buying behaviour

1. Introduction

Since last three decades the environmental issues has increased. Therefore ecological issues are very much vital and focused nowadays. There are so many discussions on greenhouse effect, environment pollution and its effect on peoples 'health i.e.; how people can stop all this negative outcomes comes out by the speedy growth of industrial production and human collision on the nature.

For example, European commission has a division of international environment policy, where ecological concerns are discussed within different areas, from agriculture to transport. Companies started to show their interest towards environmental issues and started preparing strategies and produce environment- friendly products, which are supposed to be good for humans, nature and companies 'own image in the mind of the people and in the market too.

Although eco-responsible products market share is not that big, but during the last years it was noticed the gradually growing demand on these kinds of products. Now so many companies from different fields tried their level best to make their goods more eco-logical i.e. from durable to un-durable goods. Eco-responsible products are recyclable, reusable and in refillable packaging. In short that product which is harmless to environment as well as to nature.

In this competitive world company tries to by forget themselves from others and try to make them unique. For this purpose the companies put some Eco-label symbols in their products. (Gallastegui, 2002: 316; Teisl, Roe, Hicks, 2001:339) ^[15, 16]. An eco-label is a label or emblem to certify that a product meets lofty environmental and performance standards and has less contact on the environment as compare to non-eco label products. Beyond this environmental aspect, it also shows that a company is socially responsible (Ghauri & Cateora, 2005: 475) ^[3]. One of the first ecological labels was The EU Eco label. It was established in 1992 to convince businesses to produce those classes of products and services which are really good for the environment. The European Eco-labeled products and services are stamped with a flower logo, allowing consumers recognize them simply. (European Commission - Environment – Eco label, 2008:7) ^[1].

Eco-label products: An Eco-label is mainly a label which differentiates products with those products which have an adverse impact on the environment.

Corresponding Author:

Sudhadhara K Samal

Assistant Professor, Prof. V. B.

Shah Institute of

Management, Amroli, Surat,

Gujarat, India

A product which consider as an Eco-label complies with nature without creating an adverse effect to the environment. Eco-labeling products now create a good impact not only on national level but international level too. It also encourages eco-friendly practices for governments and help to recognise and set up markets for marketers. Eco-products exactly mean earth friendly or harmless to environment. Even though there is no worldwide certifications or principles to consider the product as eco-friendly, but there are so many Eco-labeling organisations that have the certificates of Eco-label. In India Centre for Pollution Board, Ministry of Environment and Forest has launched the eco-labeling scheme known as Eco-marks in 1991 for easy recognition of eco-responsible products for increasing the awareness of consumers. In India the products which come under the categories of Eco-marks' scheme are like soaps and detergent, paper, packaging materials, batteries, food items, electrical/ electronic goods, lubricating oils, textile, leathers, wood substitutes etc.

Green packaging: The word green packaging considers those particular things which help the environment to protect from pollution. By focusing towards this concept most of the companies are trying to use green concept in their production process and packaging too. So that company can give tough competition to their competitors.

Green marketing: Green Marketing came into existence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The American Marketing Association (AMA) held the first workshop on "Ecological Marketing" in 1975. The proceedings of this workshop resulted in one of the first books on green marketing entitled "Ecological Marketing". Green marketing is an attempt to differentiate a product as being eco-responsible or eco-friendly. In simple term green marketing means marketing of those green products which are made from recycled content or designed for 3-R, that is reuse, recycling, or remanufacturing. They are usually non-toxic, durable and energy efficient. Here by considering the same competitor try their level best to create awareness among the customers regarding green products.

Consumer buying behavior can be defined as the investigation of how self-determining consumers or groups purchase, their use and adjust the services according to their needs and preferences. Kotler says that these needs are be different according to cultures, situations and people characteristics (Kotler and *et al*, 2009: 224)^[6]. As per Mc Carty and Shrum, those consumers whose purchase behavior is subjective by ecological concerns will be considered as green consumers (McCarty & Shrum, 1995)^[12].

This is significant that green buying behavior differs from general buying behavior in different aspects, such as age, income, values and attitudes (McCarty *et al*, 1995)^[12]. For example, one of the research shows that it can be easily categorized the customers who are considered as green purchaser and non-green purchaser. It says that the people who are better educated with high income and broad minded are eco-responsible purchaser as compare to younger, nonpolitical, less educated people. There is also another outlook of the differences between green buyers and non-green buyers. Which are based on some evidence related to the individual like, Social value direction, reliance in others, orientation group influence, and perceived value (Gupta & Ogden, 2009)^[4]. It also says that the people who are consider as a green consumer they are willing to pay a

premium price for the eco-responsible products. Premium price means the price which is little bit high as compare to the price of normal products which are not consider as eco-friendly products.

2. Literature Review

Eco-labels are shaped to notify the buyer with such objectives as to provide them with more knowledge about the environmental effects of their utilization, generating a change towards more environmentally friendly consumption patterns, and to persuade producers, governments and other agents to boost the environmental standards of products/services (Gallastegui, 2002: 316)^[15]. There are different forms of eco-labels, some are obligatory and some are intentional. Obligatory labels are rules of certain standard of the product recognized by the government and written in the regulation. Intentional labels are divided into three categories according to the ISO standard: type I, type II and type III.

The type I label is refers exactly to those products which have eco-responsible characters; it tries to influence people to buy Eco-friendly goods (Gallastegui, 2002: 317)^[15]. This type of label is generally known by the customers and usually referred to as eco-label (Rex, Bauman, 2006: 570)^[11].

Type II labels is which are made by the producers, importers or distributors and anxiety about a specific trait of the product, for example „CFC free“ products (free of chlorofluorocarbons, which are very harmful chemicals that may demolish the environment or the ozone layer of the earth).

Type III labels provides quantified environmental data of a product which is based upon self-determining authentication using preset parameters. These parameters are set by qualified autonomous bodies and based on life cycle appraisal. This type of information provided by the label is equal to nutrition labels on food product that gives idea regarding fat, sugar or vitamin contents. It is an infrequent label. (Ecospecifier, 2010; Gallastegui, 2002: 316)^[15].

In view of the fact this study concerns the view point of customer towards eco-labels. Here in this research paper it focus on type I eco-label, because going to concentrate in our research on eco-label type I, as it is the most familiar type and concentrate on customer awareness on overall environmental uniqueness of the product. In one of the research it found that there are several authorized Nordic eco-labels in Sweden, which are: Swan (Nordic Ecolable)^[9], KRAV. In this research paper the researcher has concentrating on the label KRAV, because it is the official eco-label for food and textile (Svanen, 2007)^[17].

In order to acquire KRAV label, the company's product should be first certified by suitable companies. This costs certain amount of money for those companies who want this label for their product even the company also permitted for license by paying the authorized fees for it, to use the label (KRAV, 2010)^[5]. So this may be one of the reason that why eco-labeled products are more costly than ordinary once. Green buying is a way of people to show their concern about environmental issues. Eco-labels products make environment friendly consumers more comfortable for taking decision regarding their buying behavior process and it make sure that which products they will prefer and consider as eco-labeled product.

Kotler and his associates say that consumers who are more concerned about the environmental issues, look for the those products which is produced in a proper way as it is not harmful for the environment and they are ready for spending money to move forward for their personal health. Such kinds of consumers with such an approach to life are called LOHAS consumers. LOHAS stands for Lifestyle of health and sustainability. LOHAS consumers are essentially involved in health care, organic clothing and food as well as social responsible investing (Kotler *et al* 2009: 232) ^[6]. According to Kotler *et al* (2009:233) ^[6] around 50 percent of Europeans buy more green products than Americans and almost 30 percent of them manipulate more on their friends and family about the environmental issues than Americans. Researcher believes that the key motive could be the availability of LOHAS products.

On the other hand the eco-friendly people or the green buyers are not only motivated by their attitude but also with other factors like their education, product price, age of customer, social status, income etc (Kotler *et al* 2009: 230) ^[6].

One more researcher has found out the answer of a question, that is —Who are the regular green consumers? Habitually it was young, well-educated and wealthy people. Some earlier research has studied that mature people are more anxious about environmental issue and they put the things into action more in a green manner (Mainieri *et al*, 1997: 191) ^[8].

As per KRAV marketing report 2010 (p.6) says that it is more and more difficult to sort out standard green consumer. That is possible only by seeing some trends in green consumption. KRAV report says that the female are more green buyers as compare to man, the people who buys green products are relatively young i.e.; around the age of 18-30 as well as the people who are rich or wealthy they are eager to buy more eco-labeled products as compare to middle level or lower level people. (KRAV marketing report: 6).

Earlier researches try to find out that, what is that particular thing which may allow consumers to buy ecological products? The reasons may be like, now people have more conscious towards their health, and they feel that green products are healthier as compare to non-eco labeled products. Even the reason may be they are more environments conscious. But even though customers make or tell themselves as they have environmentally free behavior but as soon as the time comes for purchasing of green products, they were more price sensitive (Mainieri, Barnett, Valedo, Oskamp, 1997: 193) ^[8]. As per some researcher consumers are purchasing ecological products, even though they are not aware about that they are ecological (Tjörnemo, 2001: 6) ^[18].

As per Vitalis —Green labels provide a very unique characteristics of products which make it different from others and it also provides an important marketing tool to marketers (Vitalis, 2002: 5) ^[13], so they can make aware to consumers so that it would be easy for them to distinguished the green product and they can easily find out for their purchasing decision. However, some people can get the wrong impression about the green symbols, and have misperceptions about eco-labeled product like people may feel or believe that eco-labeled goods have some distinctive quality which may be not presented in normal product (Gallastegui, 2002: 320) ^[15].

As per J.A Ottma: —Need for informationl says that before making decision for green purchasing, consumer always want information about how to make out green products and what are those places where one can find those products (J.A Ottman, 1992:34) ^[10]. According to Ottman (1992: 34) ^[10] researcher has try to find out that 54 percent of consumers rarely read the labels and they want maximum information or knowledge through advertising.

Consumer who are more concern for the environment, are not showing their interest for purchasing green products may be due to the price like the products which are organically grown vegetables or may be the availability of the products. Even sometime it's very difficult to search out those products in the market (John Wasik, 1996:10) ^[14].

There are some other aspects which make green consumers differ from others like, trust in others, influence of reference group, social value directions As it has been already mentioned in the introduction, green buying behavior differs from non-green buying behavior in different aspects, some of them are social value direction, and may be perceived efficiency (Gupta & Ogden, 2009) ^[4].

According to G.Macintosh& Stevens (2010) ^[7] Social Value Orientation may be defined as personal preferences for the distribution of outcomes to oneself and others.

As per Gupta and Ogden three majors Social Orientation Value are there (Gupta & Ogden, 2009) ^[4].

- Willingness to increase the interest towards serving the environment of both self and others outcomes with full of cooperation.
- One should concentrate on self-achievement which may be known as Individualism.
- Perceive that kind of competition which helps on achievement for own self over others.

3. Importance of study

This research helps to know that whether consumers have an idea regarding the word eco-label or not? If yes, then what initiative they are taken for this particular issue and how much they are conscious regarding this matter. In this era, especially in India many companies are still not focusing on Green marketing concept as per the theories given by renowned authors. So it is one of the good opportunities for them to create a competitive advantage for in front of their competitors. But the main focus of this study is that though the companies are showing their responsibility towards the nation and the environment, but is that really going to be fruitful without the co-operation of people of that country? Now slowly and steadily the marketers are using the word Green, Eco-label, etc. kind of word to promote their products and make it unique from others. But the main focus is how sensibly these words are utilized and put in to action reliably in this upcoming trend.

4. Scope of study

As the research is carried out within the Surat city of Gujarat, so the scope is limited to particular geographical area of Surat city like, Parle point, City light road, Pipload, Ichhanath, Vesu. The target population is the general people of particular area of Surat city and through this research the scope is broaden for the marketers of Surat city. For researchers, this study recommended that consumer's attitude towards eco-labeled product and practices are somewhat gifted. Researcher should explore the factors

which influence the attitude of consumers towards eco-label products. The purpose of this study is to examine the potential for Eco-label product marketing in the current economic system through a better understanding of consumers' attitude towards eco-labeled products and their purchasing behaviour toward it.

5. Research Methodology

In this study the data are collected through questionnaire method which is considered as a primary method for collecting the data. Here the questionnaire was been filled through interview of 200 respondents of Surat city, but the analysis and result has comes out only of the responses of 169 respondent who shows their interest in purchasing eco-labeled products as rest of the respondent are not ready to buy Eco-label product may be of certain reason. So they are not further carry forward for further analysis. And the secondary data regarding theories related to the topic are collected through some journals and articles, whose reference are given in bibliography.

5.1 Testing of Hypothesis

- **H₀:** there is no association between gender and knowledge regarding the word eco-label.
- **H₀:** there is no association between gender and factors influencing buying of eco-label products.
- **H₀:** there is no association between gender and price sensitivity towards eco-label products.

5.2 Research Design: Descriptive Research Design

Initially this study was explored with detail review of literature. After wards on gaps were been recognized and Descriptive research design was used in this research. It includes survey and facts, findings inquire of different kinds. The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of the dealings as it exists in current situation. Again if the research is want to know the question like who, what, when, why, whom, which kind of answers then descriptive research is useful for this study.

5.3 Sampling

This research papers' sample creation was general public of particular area of Surat city. Researcher has chose field survey to carry out the survey so data can be collected with minimum hurdle of communication. Researcher has collected the information personally with the help of a prearranged and non-disguised questionnaire.

5.4 To Design data collection Instrument

Well structured questionnaire is been used to collect data to collect two types of information - classification and basic research related information. A forwarding paragraph was been framed to glance to participants. Content for information was appropriately decided, and questions were framed. The questions asked were close ended questions. The questions asked were dichotomous question, multiple choice questions and question that could be judge on scale.

5.5 Sampling Design

- **Sample Unit:** General customers of Surat city
- **Sample size:** 200
- **Sampling method:** Convenience Sampling

5.6 Statistical Analysis of data

Keeping in mind what objectives researcher has to achieve, researcher has done that type of statistical analysis using tools like percentage, mean and different types of Hypothesis Testing. This was with the help of SPSS-15 and Microsoft Excel.

6. Limitations concern with study

- Few respondents have ignored to give response to one of the demographic variable i.e. Family Income. So this factor was not considered during Objective & analysis.
- The sample unit selected for this study were belong to nearby geographical area known as pose area so the data which might be collected from them have similar responses because of same status i.e. Educated and High income group. Data strength would have been increased with the selection of varied demographic participants.
- The opinion expressed by the respondents may be biased.
- Only some variables are been selected for study, while there is been great possibility for advance study.

7. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Meaning of Eco-label for respondents

Knowledge regarding the word eco-label	Responses	
	N	Percent
Product is good for health	78	30.0%
Product is good for environment	60	23.1%
It is just an advertising trick	25	9.6%
Better quality	67	25.8%
Environmental concern	23	8.8%
Nothing	7	2.7%
Total	260	100.0%

As per the table no.1, it can easily interpret that maximum respondent have a very good knowledge regarding the word eco-label by saying that eco-label products are good for health i.e. 30%. But next to it most of people says that eco-label word is nothing for them i.e. 39.6%. It shows that still marketers have good opportunity to show their marketing talent by convincing those who have neutral or negative response for the word eco-label.

Table 2: Sources of Information about eco-label products

Sources of Information	Responses	
	N	Percent
TV	50	20.8%
Family	58	24.2%
Friend	39	16.3%
Colleagues	18	7.5%
Newspaper	75	31.3%
Total	240	100.0%

As per the table no.2, it can interpret that maximum number of respondents is getting information regarding eco-label products through newspaper i.e. 75 (31.3%). It indicates that marketers can acknowledge their consumers about eco-label products through different- different marketing promotion tools and activities as well as by creating opinion leader. So that they can create good competitive advantage in the market and earn good market share too.

Table 3: Kinds of Eco-products purchased by respondents

Kinds of Eco-products	Responses	
	N	Percent
Health care products	89	36.0%
Clothes	20	8.1%
Bakery/food products	101	40.9%
Electric items	35	14.2%
Cleaning products	2	0.8%
Total	247	100.0%

Here in this above mentioned table no.3, it clearly seen that 40.9% respondents purchased food products like bakery products, meat, milk, organic vegetables etc. Next to that 36% consumers were very conscious towards their health so they purchased health care products as compare to other

products. So it shows that people are curious towards their health and they are more conscious towards their routine life activities. That is why they are trying to use eco-label products without bothering about price.

Table 4: Opinions of respondents towards cost of Eco-label products

Opinions	Responses	
	N	Percent
It costs more to produce them	51	30.0%
Not many people buy them, so they should cost more to cover Production costs	84	49.4%
It is just advertisement	34	20.0%
Other	1	0.6%
Total	170	100.0%

As per the table no.4 it shows that 49.4% consumers have the opinion that the cost of the eco-label products are increased because many of the people does not buy the eco-label products, so company charges maximum price to cover the production cost. Whereas 30% respondents feel that it cost more to produce them. So it can interpret that still consumers are not sure about the reason for increasing in the

price of eco-label products. It's the duty of marketers to make people aware regarding the myth of green products and give them a proper knowledge regarding it.

H₀: there is no association between gender and knowledge regarding the word eco-label.

Table 5: Chi-square between Gender and Knowledge regarding Eco-label

Particulars	Male	Female	Chi-square	P-value
Product is good for health	48 (61.5%)	30 (38.5%)	5.478	0.019
Product is good for environment.	49 (81.7%)	11 (18.3%)	5.654	0.017
It is just an advertisement trick	18 (72.0%)	7 (28.0%)	0.035	0.851
It shows Nothing	45 (67.2%)	22 (32.8%)	0.563	0.453
Product is of Better quality	17 (73.9%)	6 (26.1%)	0.156	0.692
It shows Environmental Concern	6 (85.7%)	1 (14.3%)	0.821	0.365

Table no.5 shows the Chi-square between gender and knowledge regarding eco-label. Here p- value is greater than 0.05 in all the variables except first two Variables i.e. 'product is good for health' and 'product is good for environment'. Thus, these two null hypotheses can be rejected. So, it can be concluded that there is a significant association among male and female regarding knowledge of eco-label product i.e. regarding health and environment.

value is greater than 0.10 in all the variables except one variable i.e. Environment Concern. Thus, the null hypothesis can be rejected. So, it can be concluded that there is a significant association among male and female regarding environment concern which influence their buying behaviour.

H₀: there is no association between gender and factors influencing buying of eco-label products.

H₀: there is no association between gender and price sensitivity towards eco-label products.

Table 6: Chi-square between Gender and Factors influencing buying of Eco-label products

Particulars	Male	Female	Chi-square	P-value
Status	25 62.5%	15 37.5%	1.576	0.209
Environment concern	67 76.1%	21 23.9%	2.886	0.089
Better quality	25 73.5%	9 26.5%	0.198	0.656
Health concern	24 77.4%	7 22.6%	0.894	0.344

Table no.6 shows the Chi-square between gender and factors influencing buying of eco-label products. Here p-

Table 7: Chi-square between Gender and price sensitivity towards Eco-label products

Cost	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Yes	51	23	74
	68.9%	31.1%	100.0%
No	24	13	37
	64.9%	35.1%	100.0%
can't say	44	14	58
	75.9%	24.1%	100.0%
Total	119	50	169
	70.4%	29.6%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.453	2	.484

Table no.7 shows the Chi-square between gender and factors influencing buying of eco-label products. Here p-value is greater than 0.05. Hence Null hypothesis is accepted. That means there is no association between gender and price-sensitivity towards eco-label products. It can be drawn that, gender doesn't make any difference Attitude towards paying premium price for eco-label products.

Table 8: Cross tabulation between gender and future price paying opinion of customers towards eco-label products

	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Yes	48	23	71
	67.6%	32.4%	100.0%
No	17	10	27
	63.0%	37.0%	100.0%
can't say	54	17	71
	76.1%	23.9%	100.0%
Total	119	50	169
	70.4%	29.6%	100.0%

As per the table no.8, it shows that there are maximum males i.e. 67.6% are ready to continuing their purchasing for eco-label products in future though the price may increase as compare to female i.e. 32.4%. It shows that female are little bit highly price sensitive as compare to males when the question arises for future. Further the calculation shows that 71 consumers are not sure about their future action towards eco-label products. But if marketer can try they can easily convinced those consumers by using their magical marketing tricks. So this result shows opportunities for marketers to create competitive advantage by focusing on potential customers 3who are not sure for their future action towards eco-label products.

8. Conclusion

Now a day Green marketing is one of the very emerging issues in marketing world, so it cannot be ignore by any marketers. The intention of this research paper was to find out how eco-labeled products influence consumer buying behaviour. Even though this research paper has surveyed 200 people from the whole Surat city, it was possible to get an idea regarding the factors which influence them to purchase eco-labeled products and whether they are willing to pay more for the eco-label products as compare to ordinary products. This research paper concluded that maximum respondents have good knowledge about eco-label word. They even purchasing organic products as well as health care products too. Even they have the knowledge about why the eco-label products are costlier than the ordinary one. This research shows that there is no such relation between gender and the factors which influence their buying behaviour.

This paper search out that the main sources from where the people know about eco-labeled products were social networks, magazines, TV, news-papers and friends. It shows that consumers are not only want the environmentally products but also they want proper information too. The one of the reason which found out in this research is people who are really conscious about the environment they buy the

eco-labeled products. Pro- environmental consumers buy eco-label products and this thing helps them to make their decision more rapidly, and this is what makes them think different about those products which are different from other simple or ordinary products. Still, so many people consider that the time will come when everyone in future will feel that eco-label product is really good for them as compare to other ordinary products. Even the companies also try to compete on this basis and they would definitely search for the eco-logical certification for their products. This clearly indicates that ecological products will be in an enormous demand in the future and the companies who really want to create a good ecological market in future have to think seriously from today onwards.

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