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Perception and Awareness of Consumers towards Green Products: Evidence from India

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ABSTRACT

Consumers' growing concern for a healthy life has increased the production and use of eco-friendly products. Green marketing refers to the practice of conducting business based on its environmental benefits. Despite the health benefits of green marketing, many consumers remain unaware of it and its associated products. The study **aims** to provide consumers' views and perceptions of green marketing in Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh, India. The research is based on the primary **data** collected from consumers using a structured questionnaire to understand their perceptions of eco-friendly or green products. The study identifies the importance of green marketing and the critical role of green products in people's daily lives. The key factors influencing the buying decision of green products among customers have been identified, along with the reasons for the non-use of green products by other customers. The **results** show that consumers in Kadapa City, although aware of green marketing, have a low preference for buying green products. The study **concludes** that the highly influential factor that encourages customers to buy more green products is environmental motive, but the expensiveness of green products is the major reason for the low-level buying of green products by customers.

Keywords: green products; green marketing; environmental consciousness; consumer perception; consumer awareness; health; safety; environmental benefits; India

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ОРИГИНАЛЬНАЯ СТАТЬЯ

Восприятие и осведомленность потребителей об экологически чистых товарах: эмпирический анализ из Индии

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Растущее стремление потребителей к здоровому образу жизни привело к увеличению производства и использования экологически чистых продуктов. Зеленый (экологичный) маркетинг относится к практике ведения бизнеса с учетом его экологических преимуществ. Несмотря на пользу зеленого маркетинга для здоровья, многие потребители по-прежнему не знают о нем и связанных с ним продуктах. **Целью** исследования является изучение мнений и представлений потребителей о зеленом маркетинге в Кадапе, Андхра-Прадеш, Индия. Исследование основано на первичных **данных**, полученных от потребителей с помощью структурированной анкеты, с целью выяснения их восприятия экологически чистых или зеленых продуктов. Исследование выявило важность зеленого маркетинга и решающую роль экологически чистых продуктов в повседневной жизни людей. Определены ключевые факторы, влияющие на решение покупателей о покупке экологически

чистых товаров, а также причины неиспользования экологически чистых товаров другими покупателями. **Результаты** показывают, что потребители в городе Кадапа, хотя и осведомлены о зеленом маркетинге, не отдают предпочтения покупкам экологически чистых продуктов. В исследовании делается **вывод**, что очень важным фактором, который побуждает клиентов покупать больше зеленых продуктов, является экологический мотив, но дороговизна экологически чистых продуктов — основная причина низкого уровня продаж.

Ключевые слова: экологически чистые продукты; зеленый маркетинг; экологическое сознание; потребительское восприятие; осведомленность потребителей; здоровье; безопасность; экологические преимущества; Индия

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Introduction

Green marketing refers to the process of selling products and services with environmental benefits. Green marketing is a holistic approach that involves producing and marketing products and services in a way that minimizes their negative impact on the environment and nature. These products or services may be environmentally friendly or produced in a sustainable manner. It helps reduce immediate and long-term damage to the environment. It enhances consumer awareness about ecological problems and social responsibility.

The eco-friendly products may be of different kinds, e.g., bio-degradable cutlery, bamboo toothbrushes, environmentally friendly clothes, recycling plastic materials, vegan pet accessories, recycled active wear, reusable and stainless-steel water bottles, bio-degradable garden pots, reusable lunch wraps, recycled stationery, reusable grocery bags, eco-friendly phone cases, bamboo containers, paper and steel straws. The listed eco-friendly products are based on various types of ideas for generating and promoting eco-friendly green marketing.

Literature review

Bhatia and Jain [1] found that although consumers had a high level of awareness about green products, they were unaware of the green initiatives carried out by various government and non-government agencies, indicating the need for more efforts from organizations in this area. Dharmalingam and Palanisamy [2] have studied consumer perceptions of green products and how they influence buying behavior. This study statistically proved that level of age, education and income have significantly influenced the perception of green products. The study has concluded that consumers have a positive impact on green products. Mathai and Jegan [3] have conducted research on the factors influencing consumer satisfaction with green products. They have

concluded that green values were found to be prevalent among respondents, and consumers were only moderately aware of green marketing practices and products. They also discovered that respondents shared common green values. According to Unnamalai and Gopinath [4], marketers and consumers are increasingly aware of the importance of switching to green products and services as consumers become more aware of the negative effects of global warming, non-biodegradable solid waste, pollutants of air, water, and land. According to Rajalakshmi et al. [5], people typically associate green marketing with the promotion and advertising of environmentally friendly products, but in reality, the product should originate naturally from the cultivation itself. Vani [6] investigated consumers' perceptions in Bengaluru. The study concludes that most Bangalore consumers possess knowledge of green marketing concepts and products. There is an association between gender, levels of education and the status of awareness of green marketing. There is no association between age group, monthly income and the status of awareness of green marketing. Most consumers' decisions to buy green products are influenced by several attributes. Most of the consumers strongly agreed with the different descriptions of green products. Kaur [7] has explained that green marketing has significance for both consumers and marketers, and it strongly supports the beginning of an era of green marketing in India. Due to its local concentration, the study's generalizability is limited, yet it nevertheless offers useful insights into consumer attitudes toward green products. The author has suggested that future studies can concentrate on consumer psychographic segmentation in order to evaluate their green values and preferences. Reddy et al. [8] have investigated how consumers' awareness of environmental issues has influenced their preferences while

shopping for eco-friendly goods. The study concluded that green product marketers owe greatly to perceived costs among consumers and are essential for creating marketing communication campaigns promoting green products. Olipane [9] found out that a large section of the respondents (50.30%) are from the age group of 25–44 years old with a mean of 37.64 years old; many respondents have attained bachelor's degrees (46.30%); the majority are from rank and file positions (72.60%); while supervisory positions were held by 27.40%; half of the respondents are permanent (49.50%); some are temporary (28.70%); and contractual (21.80%). Papadopoulos et. al. [10] concluded that the Greek enterprises in the timber sector expressed a great interest in the protection of forests all over the world, ranging from illegal logging to their rational management. At the same time, in their overwhelming majority, they strongly support certification of the sustainable management of Greek forests. Thomas [11] suggested that the companies must keep in mind that the consumers are very concerned about the environmental issues cropping up in the country, and they are very willing to pay a premium price for the “green” products, if these eco-friendly products provide extra value to the consumers. The Nuryakin and Maryati [12] study raised the issue of the environment and sustainability of SMEs, as it is still an exciting research topic. This study was pioneered by social marketing theory, where company awareness of producing environmentally friendly products is essential to building sustainability and competitive advantage. Nagabhaskar and Chandrasekhar [13] have studied the competitive advantage and impact of 7 Ps (product or service, price, place, promotion, people, physical substantiation, process) of service marketing over 4 Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) of product marketing. Singh and Kumar [14] explained the concept of green marketing, its evolution, the green marketing mix, and its challenges. They also explained how companies are adopting green strategies in the market and the factors that can influence green marketing. Sewar, Kecskes and Keller [15] have analyzed and synthesized the research articles published from 2012 to 2022 that deal with green marketing and digital marketing. Correia, Sousa, Viseu and Larguinho [16] have shown that a strong correla-

tion between consumers' attention to companies' green marketing communication and green purchasing behavior has been identified. The results also confirm that individuals with higher educational levels, green attitudes, and females are the most attentive to companies' green marketing communication. Braik, Saleh and Jaaron [17] provided valuable practical insights for manufacturing managers in developing countries on the role that green marketing can play in tackling manufacturing sustainability issues. Pahuja [18] has described the status of green marketing in India, the future of green marketing and concluded that green marketing is something that will continuously grow in both practice and demand. Investors generally do not respond well to corporate news about green marketing activities, according to Mathur and Mathur [19]. The average firm in the sample loses a statistically significant 3.14% of its market value in the 20 days surrounding the announcement date. Venkatesh [20] has suggested that green or eco-friendly products have good quality, but they are more expensive than regular products. Therefore, companies producing eco-friendly products should try to reduce costs. Government and business concerns should have worked together to create awareness among consumers. Mishra and Sharma [21] discussed how businesses have increased their rate of targeting green consumers, who are concerned about the environment and allow it to affect their purchasing decisions. Moser and Uzzell [22] have explained the psychology of the environment. Oye-wole [23] presented a conceptual link between green marketing, environmental justice, and industrial ecology. It argued for greater awareness of environmental justice in the practice of green marketing. Sanjay and Gurmeet [24] have studied and analyzed the behavior and attitude of Indian consumers. Manashi [25] tried to identify the practices of green marketing adopted by various companies and the benefits derived therefrom.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the awareness of consumers in Kadapa district regarding green marketing.
2. To identify the factors influencing the buying decisions of consumers regarding eco-friendly products.
3. To analyze the reasons for the non-usage of green products by consumers.

Hypothesis

The study tested the following hypothesis:

H1: There is an association between gender and awareness of green marketing.

H2: There is an association between age and awareness of green marketing.

H3: There is an association between income level and awareness of green marketing.

Research methodology

Table 1 shows the research methodology chosen in the study, including the sample design, data collection methods and sources, nature of the research and data analysis tools used in the research.

Data analysis

The data collected from the primary sources were analyzed using percentage analysis and chi-square analysis.

Kadapa is a city in the southern part of Andhra Pradesh state, India. It is located in the Rayalaseema region and is the district headquarters of YSR Kadapa district (named in honor of Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy). As of the 2022 Census of India, the city had a population of 466,000, a 2.42% increase from 2021. *Table 2* shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents which includes gender, age, educational qualification, occupation and income levels of the respondents. It is evident from the table that the majority of the respondents are males (65%), and the least of respondents are females (35%). The respondents in the age group of 25–30 years, with 32%, are the highest compared to other age groups,

which shows that the younger generation is more interested in green marketing. The majority of the respondents are graduates (58%), and respondents with educational qualifications of post-graduation are low (8%) compared to other groups. The highest number of respondents are non-government employees (23%), and the least number are professionals (13%). Most respondents have an income level in the range of Rs.25,001–Rs.35,000, and there were no respondents whose income level is above Rs.50,000.

Table 3 represents the customer perception towards green products.

According to the data in *Table 3*, only 69% of the respondents were aware of green marketing. The remaining 31% were unaware of green marketing and its benefits, which may be due to a lack of effective promotional techniques. Although the majority of the respondents are aware of green marketing and its products, only 58% of the respondents have bought green products and the remaining 42% of the respondents have not bought any green products. Which may be due to a lack of interest and trepidation of buying new products. Most respondents have bought green products for skin care, and only some bought green household accessories, which shows that people are more conscious of their skin and prefer to buy natural products for their skin. 52% of the respondents like to buy green products on a need basis, and 38% of the respondents believe in buying products regularly, whereas 10% of the respondents buy the products rarely. 68% of the respondents have shown a willingness to buy green products whereas 32% of the respondents are not willing to buy green products, which may be due to the expensiveness of the products.

Table 1
Research approach

Data collection	Primary data: The primary data were collected through a direct interview method using a structured questionnaire. Secondary data: The secondary data were collected through research articles, journals, magazines, newspapers and websites.
Sample design	A convenient sampling method was used for collecting the responses from the consumers who are the residents of Kadapa district in Andhra Pradesh.
Sample size	The questionnaire was circulated to 150 respondents through direct interview method and through WhatsApp. 100 responses were received.
Tools used for data analysis	The research has used Microsoft Excel and SPSS Software for analyzing the data.
Statistical analysis	Simple percentage analysis Chi-square analysis

Source: Developed by the authors.

Table 2
Demographic profile of respondents

Variables	Attributes	Frequencies	Percentage of respondents (%)
Gender	Female	35	35
	Male	65	65
	Subtotal	100	100
Age	18–25 Years	28	28
	25–30 Years	32	32
	30–45 Years	18	18
	45–55 Years	15	15
	Above 60 Years	7	7
	Subtotal	100	100
Educational qualification	High School	23	23
	Intermediate	11	11
	Graduate	58	58
	Post graduate and above	8	8
	Subtotal	100	100
Occupation	Government employee	10	10
	Non-government Employee	23	23
	Business	15	15
	Professional	13	13
	Housewife	18	18
	Student	21	21
	Subtotal	100	100
Income	Up to Rs.15,000	18	18
	Rs.15,001-Rs.25,000	40	40
	Rs.25,001-Rs.35,000	26	26
	Rs.35,001-Rs.50,000	16	16
	Above Rs.50,000	0	0
	Subtotal	100	100

Source: Primary data collected by the authors.

Table 4 shows the motivational factors that influence the purchase of green products.

The data in Table 4 reveal that environmental motives are the most prominent, with 80% of respondents strongly agreeing and none strongly disagreeing, indicating a strong sense of responsibility towards the environment. 63% of the respondents strongly agree, 18% of the respondents agree, 15% of the respondents stay neutral, 4% of the respondents disagree, and none of the respondents strongly disagree with the health concern factor, which makes it second among the other factors, which shows that

people are concerned about their health. Improving quality of lifestyle received strongly agreed responses, with 37% and 24% of the respondents disagree and strongly disagreeing collectively, which shows that people are happy with their quality of life with the traditional products they are using. 24% and 20% of respondents strongly agree with need and social status factors, which shows that people are not much interested in purchasing green products for the sake of need or on the basis of social status.

Fig. 1 visualizes the motivational factors influencing the purchase decision for green products.

Table 3
Customer perception towards green products

Particulars		Frequencies	Percentage of respondents (%)
Awareness of green marketing	Yes	69	69
	No	31	31
	Total	100	100
Bought green products recently	Yes	58	58
	No	42	42
	Total	100	100
Types of products bought recently	Food	40	40
	Kitchen accessories	32	32
	Skin care	80	80
	Household accessories	22	22
Frequency of buying green products	Regularly	38	38
	Need basis	52	52
	Rarely	10	10
	Total	100	100
Willingness to buy green products	Yes	68	68
	No	32	32
	Total	100	100

Source: Primary data collected by the authors.

Table 4
Motivational factors influencing the purchase of green products

No	Motivational factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Health concern	63 (63%)	18 (18%)	15 (15%)	4 (4%)	00 (00%)
2	Improving quality of lifestyle	37 (37%)	26 (26%)	13 (13%)	22 (22%)	2 (2%)
3	Environmental motive	80 (80%)	15 (15%)	5 (5%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)
4	Need	24 (24%)	23 (23%)	10 (10%)	42 (42%)	1 (1%)
5	Social status	20 (20%)	13 (13%)	18 (18%)	38 (38%)	11 (11%)

Source: Primary data collected by the authors.

It is evident that environmental motive is the factor that was selected by the highest number of respondents (80%). Whereas social status is the factor that is least considered by the respondents (20%).

Table 5 shows the reasons for consumers not to use green products.

Among the reasons, expensiveness is the major reason selected by the respondents with the highest responses of 78%. This shows that consumers are backing out of buying green products due to their expensive nature. The outbreak of various brands selling green products has created confusion among people, which is evident from the fact that the fact

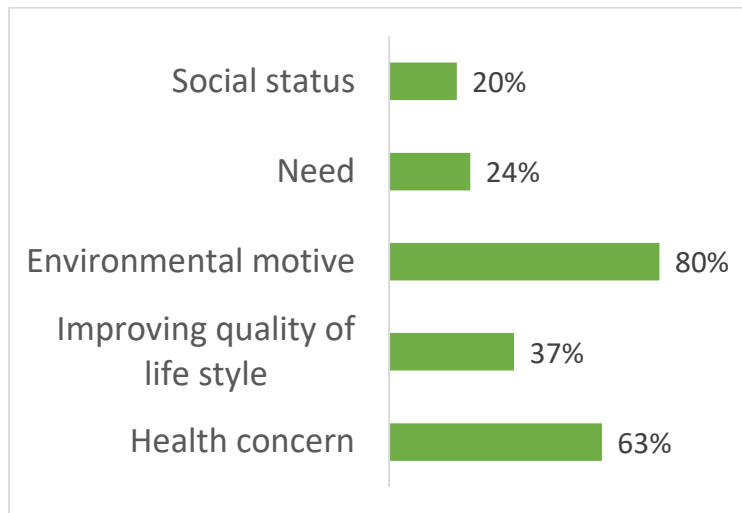


Fig. 1. Motivational factors influencing the purchase green products

Source: Developed by the authors.

Table 5

Reasons for non-usage of green products by consumers

No	Reasons	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Expensiveness	78 (78%)	17 (17%)	5 (5%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)
2.	Lack of trust	49 (49%)	13 (13%)	24 (24%)	12 (12%)	2 (2%)
3.	Non- availability	19 (19%)	11 (11%)	1 (1%)	45 (45%)	24 (24%)
4.	Lack of knowledge	48 (48%)	14 (14%)	9 (9%)	22 (22%)	7 (7%)
5.	Insufficient varieties	59 (59%)	21 (21%)	10 (10%)	9 (9%)	1 (1%)
6.	Various brands	68 (68%)	16 (16%)	7 (7%)	5 (5%)	4 (4%)

Source: Primary data collected by the authors.

that 68% of respondents strongly agreed with the reason. Insufficient variety has also been a major reason for the non-usage of green products. The respondents also identified lack of trust and lack of knowledge as their top concerns (49% and 48%, respectively). 19% of the respondents feel that green products are available both online and offline, but genuine green products are rare to find.

Fig. 2 shows the reasons for non-usage of green products by the consumers.

According to Fig. 2, expensiveness is the top reason with 78%, followed by various brands with 68%, which shows that consumers feel that green products are expensive to buy and also the variety of brands. According to respondents,

non-availability is the least responded reason for the non-usage of green products. This may be due to the fact that green products are easily available in online and offline stores, but genuine green products are very rare to find.

Hypothesis testing: Chi-square analysis

The hypothesis testing was performed using the Chi-square method.

H0: There is no association between gender and awareness of green marketing.

H1: There is an association between gender and awareness of green marketing.

Table 6 shows the relationship between gender and awareness of green marketing.

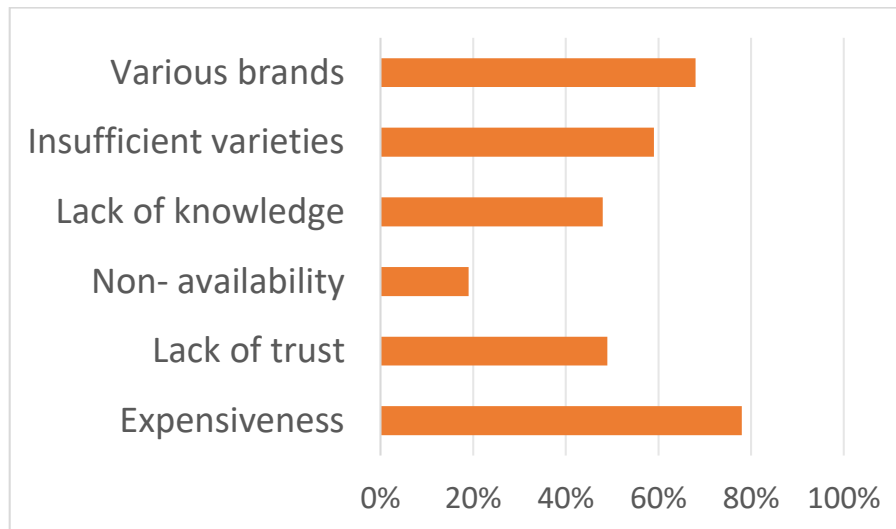


Fig. 2. Reasons for non-usage of green products

Source: Developed by the authors.

Table 6
Relationship between gender and awareness of green marketing

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Male	44	21	65
Female	25	10	35
Total	69	31	100
Chi-square = 0.149			

Source: Developed by the authors.

Table 7
Relationship between age group and awareness of green marketing

Age group	Yes	No	Total
Up to 25 years	15	13	28
25–30 Years	22	10	32
30–45 Years	16	02	18
45–55 Years	09	06	15
Above 60 Years	03	04	07
Chi-square = 7.995			

Source: Developed by the authors.

The above table shows the relationship between gender and awareness of green marketing through Chi-square analysis. From the Chi-square test, it is observed that the p-value is 0.6995. $p > 0.05$

Since the p-value is greater than the significant alpha level of 0.05, H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected. Which means that there is no association between gender and awareness of green marketing.

H_0 : There is no association between age group and awareness of green marketing.

H_2 : There is an association between age group and awareness of green marketing.

Table 7 shows the relationship between the age group and awareness of green marketing.

The above table shows the relationship between the age group and awareness of green marketing through Chi-square analysis. From the Chi-square test it is observed that the p-value is 0.0047. $p < 0.05$

Since p-value is less than the significant alpha level of 0.05, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. Which means that there is an association between age group and awareness of green marketing.

H_0 : There is no association between income level and awareness of green marketing.

H_3 : There is an association between income level and awareness of green marketing.

Table 8 shows the relationship between income level and awareness of green marketing.

The above table shows the relationship between the age group and awareness of green marketing through Chi-square analysis. From the Chi-square test, it is observed that the p-value is 0.013406. $p < 0.05$.

Since the p-value is less than the significant alpha level of 0.05, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. Which means that there is an association between the income level of the respondents and their awareness of green marketing.

Table 8
Relationship between income level and awareness of green marketing

Income level	Yes	No	Total
Up to Rs.5,000	5	13	18
Rs.15,001–Rs.25,000	25	15	40
Rs.25,001–Rs.35,000	14	12	26
Rs.35,001–Rs.50,000	13	03	16
Above Rs.50,000	0	0	0
Chi-square = 10.7093			

Source: Developed by the authors.

Findings

Sixty-five percent of the respondents are male, and 35% of the respondents are female, which shows that the number of male respondents is higher than that of female respondents. Out of 65 male respondents, 44 are aware and the remaining 21 are unaware of green marketing. Out of 35 female respondents, 25 are aware and the remaining 10 are unaware of green marketing. Chi-square analysis shows that there is no association between gender and awareness of green marketing, indicating that awareness depends on the interests of an individual, irrespective of gender. 32% of the respondents belong to the age group of 25–30 years, and 22% of the respondents from this age group are aware of green marketing. This shows that young people are more interested in green products. There is a correlation between age group and awareness of green marketing. 58% of the respondents are graduates, and 8% of the respondents are postgraduates or older. Most of the graduates are knowledgeable about green marketing. The majority of the respondents are non-government employees (23%), followed by students (21%). 40% of the respondents have an annual income of Rs.25,001–35,000, which helped in studying the lower middle-class income group of consumers. The chi-square analysis shows that there is an association between the income level of the respondents and their awareness of green marketing. 52% of the respondents buy green products on a need basis, whereas 10% of the respondents rarely buy green products. Although 69% of respondents are aware of green marketing, only 58% of the respondents are willing to buy green products. The remaining 11% of the respondents are not willing to buy green products. Environmental motive is the major factor that influences the buying decisions of consumers,

according to respondents, which shows that people are more conscious of the environment. According to respondents, the expensiveness of green products is the major reason for their non-use, which shows that customers prefer buying products that are cheaper, irrespective of their quality.

Suggestions

The findings of the research allowed the authors to formulate the following suggestions for the stakeholders to improve the situation with green marketing:

- The government should take initiatives to promote green marketing, as it protects nature and the health of people.
- Companies must use more appealing promotion strategies to attract consumers by making them aware of the benefits of green marketing.
- More innovations are needed in varieties of green products as they limit the purchase patterns of consumers' choices.
- Customer awareness programs must be conducted to promote the benefits of green products among consumers.
- Authentication by official license must be issued for verified and genuine green products to protect the trust of consumers and help identify fake products.
- Companies can increase the sale of green products by offering discounts to customers, which will help customers buy green products and solve the issue of expensiveness.
- The trust of the customers must be preserved by ensuring they receive quality and genuine products.
- There is a need for more varieties of green products, such as school bags, pencils, chalk, and

other stationery items, which will create awareness about green marketing among school-students.

Limitations of the study

We conducted the study in the Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh state with 100 respondents, capturing the perspective and perception of a limited population within a relatively small area. There is a need for studies to be undertaken in various districts of Andhra Pradesh for a broader perception of customers regarding green marketing and its products. We have tested only three attributes that significantly influence green marketing awareness. The sample size is limited to 100 respondents due to time constraint.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the consumers in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh state, India, are aware of green products, but their willingness to buy them is less than their awareness level, which is due to the expensiveness and variety of brands. Green marketing

needs more support and motivation from the government authorities by creating financial support and authorized verification, which will facilitate genuine products reaching more consumers at a reasonable price. It inspires more businesses to pursue green marketing. The main motive of green marketing is to protect people from hazardous chemicals that will have a negative impact on their health.

Green marketing will be more effective when there is proper awareness about the benefits of green products. The eco-friendly theme must be educated in children by distributing free samples of green products in educational institutions, which will help in building a positive perspective among students towards green products. More marketing strategies have to be adopted by the companies in promoting green products. The adoption of green products in our daily lives will make our lives shift towards a healthy lifestyle which is crucial for the safety of our health as well as the environment. Make green, buy green and protect green must be the motive.

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