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An analysis of practices followed by urban consumers towards the green products

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Abstract

The growing environmental concern amongst the public has demanded organizations, businesses and individuals to be responsible and conscious in their everyday activity not to cause any harm to the environment. Most environmental problems are caused by the way people living and continuously damaging the environment. The study was conducted with the aim to assess the practices among the urban consumers about green products. The exploratory research design was adopted to conduct the study. The data was collected from 300 educated consumers from the urban areas of Dharwad and Belagavi district. The data was analyzed by using frequency, percentage, mean, 't' test, modified chi-square and correlation coefficient. The results revealed that majority of the consumers belonged 22-29 years of age group and more than half of the consumers selected for study were graduates in urban. With regard to occupation one third of the consumers selected for the study were students, followed by unemployed and self-employed consumers. Majority of the consumers had medium family income of rupees 7,380-51,780 per month. Maximum number of the selected consumers belonged to upper middle socio-economic category. There is not much difference in practices of consumers with regard to general green products. With regard to energy conservation, female consumers had better practices compared to male consumers. The consumers showed better practices towards green food products Male and female consumers had almost similar practices towards green food products. Gender wise comparison reveals that female consumers showed better practices compared to male consumers towards green cosmetics. With respect to practices of the consumers towards eco-friendly textiles, male consumers had better practices than female consumers. The practices of the consumers will help the policy makers to develop the product and services based on the genuine practices of the customers.

Keywords: Green products, consumers, socio economic status, practices

Introduction

Environmental pollution is one of the most serious problems experienced by humanity and other life-forms on the earth today. Going green means leading lifestyle that's not just more beneficial for people who do it, but for their surroundings as well. All the green products that we use provide benefit for the people not just economically, but also socially and environmentally, which means that the green products preserve the public health in general. The more people decide to use green products the better it is for everyone around them. When we use products that are natural, it is much better for our well-being.

The rapid economic growth in the past years have witnessed increasing consumers' consumption worldwide causing environmental deterioration through over-consumption and utilization of natural resources (Chen & Chai, 2010). With technological development, there has been an increase in industrial activities that have directly and indirectly affected the environment. The environment has been extensively exploited, resulting in climate change, global warming, pollution, environmental exploitation, ozone layer depletion etc. Such problems have raised concerns about protecting our climate, which has led to the idea of going green. Government has adopted policies to save the world from further deterioration, so businesses have chosen the environment friendly practices. Creation of goods that are environmentally friendly is one of the first initiatives taken to resolve this environmental problem.

A consumer's concern towards a safe environment has been frequently increasing. Nowadays, the market contains a wide variety of products that are environmentally safe. The purchase behavior of the consumers depends on the beliefs and the consciousness of the consumers towards their health and environmental concern. The decision to purchase these products depends on the behavior which the consumers adopt towards green products. Consumers who are concerned with the environment and are knowledgeable about the environmental issues

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when shopping try to purchase only eco-friendly products. Increasing -environmental concerns and awareness of eco-friendly products among consumers have resulted in their green buying behavior.

One can only hope that change is the only thing that is constant, once we decide protecting our nature thereby ensuring our own safe future and then the rest of it follows. Let's start using eco-friendly products for a start now and turn the vision of a lovely environment in the future a reality.

Methodology

The study was conducted during 2018-20 to know the practices followed by the urban consumers towards green products. The data was collected by using structured interview questionnaire. A total 300 consumers from urban areas of Dharwad and Belagavi district were selected for the study. The statistical tools frequency, percentage, mean scores, modified chi-square and multiple linear regression

were used to interpret the results of demographic variable and practices among the consumers.

Results and Discussion

The age of the respondents was grouped into three categories. The majority of the consumers (43.00%) were in the age group of 22-29 years, followed by more than 29 years (30.00%) and less than 22 years (27.00%). More than half of the selected consumers (57.67%) were graduates followed by 39.00 per cent were studied upto 12th standard and only 3.33 per cent were post graduates. More than one third of the consumers were students (32.67%), followed by unemployed (21.66%), self-employed (21.00%), employed in private sector (13.33%) and employed in government sector (11.33%). Majority of the urban consumers (83.00%) had medium family income of ₹ 7,380/-51,780/- and only 17.00 per cent of them had high income of more than ₹ 51,780/- as presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on their socio-personal characteristics N=300

Variables	Classification	Male (n=150)	Female (n=150)	Total
Age (yrs)	<22	39 (26.00)	42 (28.00)	81 (27.00)
	22-29	62 (41.33)	67 (44.67)	129 (43.00)
	>29	49 (32.67)	41 (27.33)	90 (30.00)
Education	Upto 12 th std.	61 (40.66)	56 (37.33)	117 (39.00)
	Graduate	84 (56.00)	89 (59.33)	173 (57.67)
	Post Graduate	5 (3.33)	5 (3.33)	10 (3.33)
Occupation	Student	35 (23.33)	63 (42.00)	98 (32.67)
	Unemployed	15 (10.00)	50 (33.33)	65 (21.66)
	Self employed	63 (42.00)	0 (0.00)	63 (21.00)
	Private sector	15 (10.00)	25 (16.67)	40 (13.33)
	Government sector	22 (14.67)	12 (8.00)	34 (11.33)
Monthly Family Income (s)	Low (<7380)	-	-	-
	Medium (7380-51780)	110 (73.33)	139 (92.66)	249 (83.00)
	High (>51780)	40 (26.67)	11 (7.33)	51 (17.00)

The distribution of the consumers according to their socio-economic status categories as per the Aggarwal (2005) ^[1] scale was represented in the Fig 1. It was clear from the data that 64.00 per cent of the urban consumers belonged to upper

middle socio-economic category, followed by lower middle (28.66%) socio economic category and only 7.33 per cent of the urban consumers belonged to high socio-economic category.

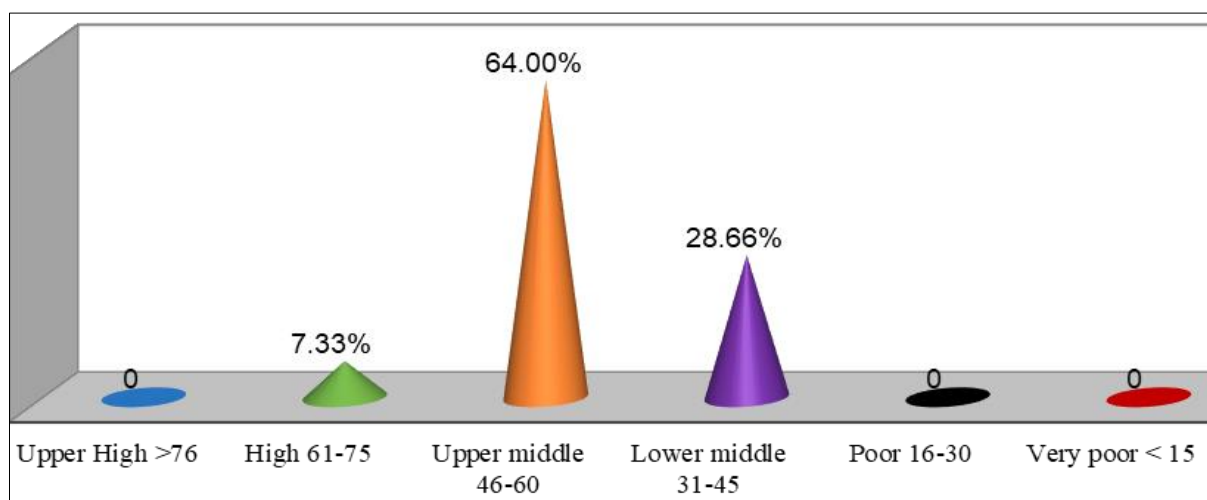


Fig 1: Socio-economics status of the selected consumers

Practices of the consumers towards green products

Practices followed by consumers towards green products

The practice followed by consumers towards green products was assessed by using three-point Likert scale.

Practices of the consumers about general green products

There was not much difference was observed between male consumers (12.16) and female consumers (12.15) practices towards general green products. The consumer's knowledge

about green products always helped them to buy the green products, they switch to different products if it is eco-friendly, they carry bag while going to market, purchased green products and they would like to buy green products even if they are more expensive than non-green ones. The results are

on par with the results of Zulfiqar and Shafaat (2015) ^[7] who revealed that people want to purchase green products at any cost as they were concerned about their environment and they were ready to pay more for the green features of the product.

Table 2: Mean scores of the practices of the consumers about general green products N=300

	Statements	Male (n=150)	Female (n=150)	Total
1.	I purchase green products in my shopping	2.31	2.36	2.34
2.	I will switch to different product if it is eco-friendly	2.47	2.47	2.47
3.	I carry bag while going to market.	2.37	2.41	2.39
4.	More knowledge about green products helps me decide to buy them	2.64	2.61	2.62
5.	I would like to buy green products even if they are more expensive than non-green ones.	2.37	2.30	2.34
	Total	12.16	12.15	12.16

Practices of the consumers about energy conservation

The practice followed by consumers towards energy conservation was presented in the Table 3. Female consumers (15.10) had better practices towards energy conservation compared male consumers (14.96). The consumers were concerned about the environment and know about the scarcity of the resources, so they always use energy saving bulbs and appliances, switch off the appliances while not in use, use public transportation when they go for far places, sometimes

use solar water heater and solar lights to save the amount to be spent on the electricity bill. The results are similar with the Jain *et al.* (2014) ^[3] results that Indians were motivated to practice conservation, as it is a habit for them to save money. The comfort and convenience act as major barriers in conservation. The consumers were interested in appliances level control, smarter sockets and appliances than energy monitoring devices.

Table 3: Mean scores of the practices of the consumers about energy conservation N=300

	Statements	Male (n=150)	Female (n=150)	Total
1.	I set off household appliances while not in use	2.61	2.57	2.59
2.	I use public transportation when I go for far places.	2.48	2.65	2.56
3.	I go by walk or use bicycle to travel to near places.	2.47	2.57	2.52
4.	I use energy saving bulbs and appliances.	2.57	2.75	2.66
5.	I use solar water heater and solar lights.	2.50	2.27	2.39
6.	I put less effort into making energy efficient choices	2.33	2.29	2.31
	Total	14.96	15.10	15.03

Practices of the consumers about green food products

Table 4 examined that the practices followed by consumers towards green food products. The consumers had better practices towards food products. A glance into mean scores of male and female consumers showed almost similar practices (12.29 and 12.27 respectively) towards green food products. The consumers accept the organic foods as the nutritional foods and keep the human healthy. So, consumers always

prefer to buy organic fruits and vegetables, buy the foods which were packaged in recyclable packaging material and buy green products even if they were more expensive than the non-green ones. The results are similar with the study conducted by Renugadevi and Ramya, (2017) ^[5] who presented that majority of the respondents regularly purchase the organic foods because they opined that the organic foods were healthier, safer and contains more nutritional values.

Table 4: Mean scores of the practices of the consumers about green food products N=300

	Statements	Male (n=150)	Female(n=150)	Total
1.	I prefer to buy organic fruits and vegetable.	2.77	2.79	2.78
2.	I easily find organic food products in market	2.42	2.39	2.40
3.	I look at the ingredients label to see if it contains thing that are environmentally damaging.	2.37	2.51	2.44
4.	I buy green products even if they are more expensive than the non-green ones.	2.41	2.15	2.28
5.	I buy the foods which are packaged in recyclable packaging material.	2.32	2.43	2.37
	Total	12.29	12.27	12.28

Practices of the consumers towards green cosmetics/ herbal products

Table 5 presents the practice followed by the consumers towards green cosmetics/ herbal products. The urban consumers had better practices (12.02) towards green cosmetics. Gender wise comparison reveals that female consumers showed better practices (12.18) compared to male consumers (11.86) towards green cosmetics. The consumers who were more conscious about the health and beauty,

sometimes use green cosmetics, sometimes prefer to purchase well-known brands of green cosmetics, consult brochures and pamphlets for information before buying green cosmetics, sometimes easily find eco-friendly cosmetic products in market. The results are on par with results of Kumar *et al.* (2012) ^[4] that consumers were more concerned about their health, status and quality of life which make them buy the green cosmetics regularly.

Table 5: Mean scores of the practices of the consumers about green cosmetics/ herbal products N=300

Statements		Male (n=150)	Female (n=150)	Total
1.	I use green/herbal cosmetics	2.47	2.51	2.49
2.	I prefer purchasing well-known brands of green cosmetics	2.41	2.45	2.43
3.	I consult brochures and pamphlets for information before buying green cosmetics.	2.35	2.33	2.34
4.	I am more tempted to buy discount priced green cosmetics.	2.35	2.43	2.39
5.	I easily find eco-friendly cosmetic products in market	2.28	2.46	2.37
Total		11.86	12.18	12.02

Practices of the consumers towards eco-friendly textiles

The practice of the consumers towards eco-friendly textiles shows that the urban consumers (11.39) had better practices. It was noticed that the male consumers had better practices (11.56) compared to female consumers (11.22) towards eco-friendly textiles. The selected consumers' practice towards eco-friendly textile showed that they always purchased

synthetic clothes because; they are cheaper and need less maintenance. Sometimes buy eco-friendly textile products if they found it easily in the market. The results are incompatible with the results of Hustvedt & Dickson, (2009)^[2] that the consumers who are more concerned about environment oftenly purchase the eco-friendly or organic textile products.

Table 6: Mean scores of the practices of the consumers about eco-friendly textiles N=300

Statements		Male (n=150)	Female(n=150)	Total
1.	I buy Eco-friendly textile products	2.43	2.31	2.37
2.	When buying fabric, I think of the impact it can have on environment.	1.37	1.31	1.34
3.	I read labels when I buy clothes to determine whether they are Eco-friendly.	2.39	2.45	2.42
4.	If I found an organic apparel product, I buy that only.	2.40	2.20	2.30
5.	I buy synthetic clothes because they are cheaper and need less maintenance	2.97	2.95	2.96
Total		11.56	11.22	11.39

Comparison of practices followed by selected consumers towards green products

The Table 7 compares the practices of the selected consumers towards green products. The urban consumers (62.88) showed better practices. The female consumers (62.93) had better practices compared to male consumers (62.83). Since the consumers had similar practices towards green products there was no difference was observed between the gender. The consumers follow good practices towards purchasing green products, prefer to purchase green products when easily available in the market and understand the different attributes and the labels on the green products so, the results showed good practices towards green products. The results were incompatible with the report of the Udoakah and Okure, (2017)^[6] that even though most of the consumers were highly educated but not engaged in sustainability and efficient practices.

Table 7: Comparison of the practices followed by selected consumers about green products N=300

Products	Male (n=150)	Female (n=150)	Total
General green products	12.16	12.16	12.16
Energy saving appliances	14.96	15.10	15.03
Food products	12.29	12.27	12.28
Green cosmetics	11.86	12.18	12.02
Green textile	11.56	11.22	11.39
Overall	62.83	62.93	62.88
't' test values	0.09 ^{NS}		

NS-Non-Significant

The association between demographic variables and practices of urban and rural consumers about green products was depicted in the Table 8.

Association between demographic variables and practices of urban consumers

It was examined from the Table 8 that, the high practices towards green products was observed among the consumers

belonged to 22-29 years age group (29.46%), followed by 18-22 years aged consumers (27.16%) and the consumers belonged to more than 29 years age group (24.44%). The medium practices towards green products was found among more number of the consumers (47.78%) belonged to more than 29 years, followed by less than 22 years aged consumers (43.21%) and 22-29 years age group (40.31%). Nearly thirty per cent of the consumers (30.23%) belonged to 22-29 years age group reported low practices towards green products, followed by less than 22 years age group (29.63%) and more than 29 years age group (27.78%). The non-significant association was found between age and practices of the urban consumers towards green practices.

With respect to education, the urban consumers educated upto 12th standard reported high practices (29.06%), followed by more than one fourth of the graduate consumers (26.59%) and post graduate consumers (20.00%). Half of the post graduate consumers reported medium practices towards green products, followed by graduate consumers (43.93%) and consumers educated upto 12th standard (41.88%). Thirty per cent of the post graduate consumers reported low practices, followed by graduate consumers (29.48%) and consumers educated upto 12th standard. The non-significant association was found between age and practices of the urban consumers towards green practices as presented in the Table 8.

Similarly, more than one third of the student consumers (35.71%) reported high practices towards green products in urban area, followed by unemployed consumers (30.77%), self-employed consumers (20.63%), private employees (20.00%) and government employees (17.65%). Half of the private employees reported medium practices towards green products, followed by unemployed consumers (49.23%), self-employed consumers (42.86%), student consumers (41.84%) and government employees (29.41%). The low practices towards green products was observed among more than half of the government employees (52.94%), followed by 36.51 per cent of the self-employed consumers, private employees

(30.00%), student consumers (22.45%) and unemployed consumers (20.00%). The highly significant association was observed between occupation and practices of the urban consumers towards green products at 0.01 level as represented in the Table 8.

The high practices was noticed among 27.71 per cent of the consumers with medium income (27.71%), followed by consumers with high income category (25.49%). The medium practice was found among 44.58 per cent of the consumers with medium income, followed by high income category of consumers (37.25%). The low practice was found among majority of the consumers (37.25%) with high income, followed by middle income category of consumers (27.71%). The association was non-significant between income and practices of the consumers towards green products in the urban area as depicted in the Table 8.

The high practices was found among the consumers with upper middle socio economic status (29.17%), followed by

high socio economic status category (27.27%) and lower middle socio economic status category. Nearly sixty per cent of the consumers (59.09%) reported medium practices towards green products, followed by lower middle socio-economic status category (53.49%) and upper middle socio-economic status category (36.98%). The low practices was found among the consumers with upper middle socio economic (33.85%), followed by lower middle socio economic status (23.26%) and high socio economic status (13.64%). Significant association was found between socio economic status and practices of the selected urban consumers towards green products at 0.01 level of significance as presented in the Table 8.

Overall, more than forty (43.33%) of the consumers reported medium practices, followed by low practices (29.99%) and high practices (27.33%) towards green products as depicted in the Table 8.

Table 8: Association between demographic variables and practices of urban consumers about green products N=300

Variables	Classification	Low	Medium	High	Total	Modified χ^2
Age (yrs)	<22	24 (29.63)	35 (43.21)	22 (27.16)	81 (100.00)	1.13
	22-29	39 (30.23)	52 (40.31)	38 (29.46)	129 (100.00)	
	>29	25 (27.78)	43 (47.78)	22 (24.44)	90 (100.00)	
	Total	88 (29.33)	130 (43.33)	82 (27.33)	300 (100.00)	
Education	Upto 12 th std.	34(29.06)	49(41.88)	34(29.06)	117 (100.00)	1.64
	Graduate	51 (29.48)	76 (43.93)	46 (26.59)	173 (100.00)	
	Post Graduate	3 (30.00)	5 (50.00)	2 (20.00)	10 (100.00)	
	Total	88 (29.33)	130 (43.33)	82 (27.33)	300 (100.00)	
Occupation	Student	22 (22.45)	41(41.84)	35 (35.71)	98 (100.00)	22.39**
	Unemployed	13 (20.00)	32 (49.23)	20 (30.77)	65 (100.00)	
	Self employed	23(36.51)	27(42.86)	13(20.63)	63 (100.00)	
	Private sector	12 (30.00)	20 (50.00)	8 (20.00)	40 (100.00)	
	Government sector	18 (52.94)	10 (29.41)	6 (17.65)	34(100.00)	
Monthly Family Income (₹)	Low	-	-	-	-	1.46
	Medium	69 (27.71)	111 (44.58)	69 (27.71)	249 (100.00)	
	High	19 (37.25)	19 (37.25)	13 (25.49)	51(100.00)	
	Total	88 (29.33)	130 (43.33)	82 (27.33)	300 (100.00)	
SES	Lower middle	20 (23.26)	46 (53.49)	20 (23.26)	86 (100.00)	10.63*
	Upper middle	65 (33.85)	71 (36.98)	56(29.17)	192 (100.00)	
	High	3 (13.64)	13 (59.09)	6 (27.27)	22 (100.00)	
	Total	88 (29.33)	130 (43.33)	82 (27.33)	300 (100.00)	

** Significant @ 1% level of significance, * Significant @ 5% level of significance

An examination of Table 9 illustrates that in urban area socio economic status of the consumers negatively influenced the practices at 0.05 level. Other independent variables age, education, income and occupation of the urban consumers did

not influenced significantly to the practices. In total, the independent variables contributed 39 per cent to the practices of the consumers.

Table 9: Factors influencing practices among the consumers-Multiple linear regression analysis N=300

Constant	Age	Education	Income	Occupation	Socio Economic Status	R ²
75.226	0.041 (0.709)	1.512 (0.737)	0.543 (0.802)	0.219 (0.795)	-0.082 (-1.116)*	0.39

Figures in the parentheses indicates the calculated t-values, *The values are significant at 5% level of significance

Conclusion

Environmental pollution is one of the most serious problems experienced by humanity and other life-forms on the earth today. Going green means leading lifestyle that's not just more beneficial for people who do it, but for their surroundings as well. All the green products that we use provide benefit for the people not just economically, but also socially and environmentally, which means that the green products preserve the public health in general. There is not

much difference in practices of consumers with regard to general green products. With regard to energy conservation, female consumers had better practices compared male consumers. The consumers showed better practices towards green food products Male and female consumers had almost similar practices towards green food products. Gender wise comparison reveals that female consumers showed better practices compared to male consumers towards green cosmetics. With respect to practices of the consumers towards

eco-friendly textiles, male consumers had better practices than female consumers.

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