

Customer Perception towards Green Products in Pokhara Valley

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore customer awareness and perception towards green products in Pokhara valley. It focuses on customer perception on price, quality, availability, and promotional strategy of green products. For this purpose, the sample size was taken from the entire population of Green Product users in Pokhara Valley. Among them, 110 respondents have been selected on non-probability purposive sampling technique for determining sample size. Primary data was collected by using of structural questionnaire from the targeted respondents. Data analysis was done using the SPSS tool. Descriptive analysis was used for analyzing data. The majority of respondents feel green products as environmentally friendly and healthy and safe products. They declared that they mostly purchase organic food. An advertisement was an important source for providing information about green products to the customers. The majority of customers were not having a precise opinion about the excessive prices of green products but a larger portion were agreed to pay more for green products and to purchase green products in case of the same price as non-green products. Customers were satisfied with the quality of green products. They were aware of their harmless nature of them. They were dissatisfied with the availability of green products. Most of the respondents possessed a very pessimistic opinion towards the promotional strategies of green products. They agreed to take environmental consideration and read the product's label while buying these products. This study contributes to analyzing the customers' perception towards Marketers and manufacturers and mainly focuses on the improvement of the quality of green products and making it convenient to buy through increasing its availability and accessibility.

Keywords: *Accessibility; behaviour; green products; perception; strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, there has been a worldwide understanding of the importance of preserving environmental health. There has been an increasing consideration of environmental issues focused on sustainable living and environmental conservation all over the world. The increased industrial output has been held responsible for any negative environmental effects including loss of natural resources, air and water pollution, climate change leading to global warming, life-threatening diseases, and extermination of species (Behera and Reddy, 2002). The current rapid growth in the economy and the patterns of consumer consumption and behavior worldwide are the main cause of environmental weakening.

Grunert (1993) decided that 30-40 percent of environmental degradation has been conveyed by consumption activities of private households. As the environment continues to worsen, it has become a determined public concern in developed countries. Furthermore, it has also promoted developing countries to the green movement for the protection of environments. The potential economic and social effects of environmental deprivation are specifically significant for developing economies. They are the maximum weak to climate change and tend to be more dependent than innovative economies on the exploitation of natural resources for economic growth. Thus, responsible behavior by society and business firms from developing as well as developed countries is dynamic to achieve environmental sustainability in the future.

From a global perspective, increasing awareness of the various environmental problems has led to a shift in the way consumers think about their life. Consumers are dynamically trying to reduce their impact on the environment. Today, aware consumers are concerned about how their purchasing habits can help to minimize the negative impact on the environment. They are becoming more environmentally conscious and desirous of purchasing environment-friendly, green products. Green products are the products that pursue to protect or enhance the environment during production, use, or disposal by conserving resources and minimizing the use of toxic agents, 2 pollutions, and waste. It offers potential benefits to the environment and human health. Therefore ecologically conscious consumers have shown an enhanced tendency for them.

Sdrolia and Zarotiadis (2018) defined green products as “a product (tangible or intangible) that minimizes its environmental effect (direct and indirect) during its whole life-

cycle, subject to the existing technological and scientific status.” Perception varies provisional on an individual. Consumer awareness leads to a person’s meaningful interpretation of the company’s offerings which includes all sensory inputs through different information and results from the consumer’s concepts, thought, or feeling about the product or facilities provided. The consumer can be subjective or objective. The consumer may choose a brand not only it provides anticipated functional benefits but also used to express the consumer’s personality, social status, and affiliation (Aggrawal, 2010). Consumers’ perceptions can affect the decision-making process and buying behavior of individuals. Thus, every individual consumer has their way to understand green products and consumers’ perception about the green product is significant in guiding the green consumer purchasing behavior. The current environmental subject led to the acceptance of green products and the development of conscious consumers to safeguard the world. Being a developing country, Nepal is continuously facing environmental encounters such as poverty, deforestation, pollution, and rapid population growth.

Though government formulates the environment protection act, they remain only on paper. Government reestablishes the ban on the production, import, sale, distribution, and use of plastic bags thinner than 40 microns for the third time to reduce environmental pollution. But there is zero progress in its implementation. This time application remains doubtful. Environmental sustainability is a matter which cannot be ignored. Therefore, rigorous and coordinated efforts are highly desirable from the government with the broad participation of all stakeholders. The government solely is not responsible for controlling environmental issues. Therefore, Nepalese people are gradually showing concern towards eco-friendly products. Consumers’ knowledge and willingness to lead a healthier lifestyle and preserve the fragile environment are rising (Shrestha, 2020).

Pavan (2010) green products are the products that protect or improve the natural environment by conserving energy or resources, original grown, recyclable and reusable, reducing or eliminating the use of toxic agents, pollution and waste, containing natural ingredients or recycled content, do not pollute the environment, contains permitted chemicals and have not been tested on animals. Rather and Rajendran (2014) explored the consumer awareness about green products and their belongings on buying behavior of consumers. They also concluded that consumers buying behavior could be altered with the level of consumer awareness, but marketers and marketing should focus on educating the consumers’ about how green products are more valuable to them. Thapa (2019) researched to examine consumer level of awareness and perception towards green products in Nepal. He resolved that an

increasing number of consumers have adequate knowledge about green products features. The study offers a prerequisite for the marketer to increase their seriousness to focus more on making the consumer more aware of green products' benefits and bring about the approval of green products.

Going green is charming more than just a trend in Nepal; it has been seen as a means to advance sustainable growth. There has been the emergence of eco fairs and initiatives supported by profit and nonprofit organizations operating in service and manufacturing industries. Green marketing is upward slowly in Nepal. Although still in its beginning, the green movement has ongoing to make its influence on the consumption decisions and behaviors of Nepalese consumers. Many eco-friendly enterprises such as Eco-sathi Nepal, Antidote Nepal, Bottles to Beads, etc. are emerging in the Nepali market. Researchers around the world have explored the topic at academics as well as industrial levels from various perspectives. Most of the studies are done in developed and developing countries and captures that population, whose standard of living, taste, and preference is different from us, but such studies, however, is not valid in the context of developing countries where most of the people are on the middle-level income group. They narrowly cover customers' perceptions of our country. So it would be appropriate to conduct research at the national level which will provide a suitable conclusion in the Nepalese context. Thus, due to limited access, time and resources, this research is aimed to examine the customer perception and attitude towards green products in Pokhara.

DATA AND METHODS

It is the study of methods by which knowledge is gained, it is necessary that price, quality and availability by applying cross sectional and descriptive research design. This paper is based on quantitative and primary sources of data. Primary data represents the first-hand data collected by the structural questionnaire method. A well-structured questionnaire has been framed and collected the opinion of consumers towards green products.

The total population represents the consumers who consume green products within Pokhara valley. Out of the total population, 110 respondents were taken as a sample for the survey. The sample is selected non-probability purposive sampling method for the fulfillment of specified purpose of the study.

A formal list of the questionnaire was designed that contained respondents' profiles, a close-end questionnaire, multiple-choice questions and Likert scale questionnaires. Likert scale questionnaires contain statements constructs of price, quality, availability, and promotional

strategy of green products. Respondents were asked to rate their opinion on those statements on a five-point Likert scale, 1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly agree. The collected data were analyzed with the help of the statistical package SPSS. For analyzing the descriptive facts percentage, mean and standard deviation are implied.

Cronbach alpha is used for testing the reliability of data. Reliability reflects the consistency of a set of items (variables) in measuring the study concept. It may be mentioned that its value varies from 0 to 1, but the satisfactory value is required to be more than 0.6 for the scale to be reliable (Malhotra, 2002; Cronbach, 1951). In the present study, we, therefore, were used Cronbach's alpha as a measure of the reliability of the scale.

Table 1

Reliability of the Scale

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Consumer's perception	2	0.71
Price of the products	4	0.72
Quality of the products	4	0.66
Availability of the products	2	0.67

Source: Field survey, 2022

From table 1, it is seen that the reliability value was estimated to be $\alpha=0.66$ to 0.72 if we compare the reliability value of the scale used in the present study with the standard value alpha of 0.6 advocated by Cronbach (1951), it is observed that the scale of the present study was highly reliable for data analysis. The validity may be defined as the extent to which differences in observed scale scores reflect true differences among objects on the characteristics being measured, rather than a systematic or random error (Malhotra, 2002)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent's Profile

Respondents are those persons who have been invited to participate in a particular study and have taken part in the study. They are also known as participants. Respondents' profile plays an important role in research work as it provides information about different traits of respondents. In my questionnaire, the first part contains the demographic profile i.e. age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, and income level of respondents who use green products inside the Pokhara valley that has been interpreted and analyzed through SPSS

version 20.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Numbers	Percentage
Age(years)		
15-20	9	8.2
20-30	59	53.6
30-40	24	21.8
Above 40	18	16.4
Gender		
Female	49	44.5
Male	61	55.5
Respondents' occupation		
Students	22	20
Business owner	16	14.5
Employees	37	33.6
Housewife	11	10
Unemployed	10	9.1
Others	14	12.7
Education qualification		
Secondary level	36	32.7
Undergraduate	49	44.5
Postgraduate and above	25	22.5
Income level		
Not clear	26	23.6
Upto Rs 10000	20	18.2
Upto Rs 20000	36	32.7
More than Rs 20000	28	25.5
Frequency of buying		
Always	23	20.9
Often	38	34.5
Sometimes	34	30.9
Rarely	15	13.6

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 2 presents that 44.5 percent of them were male, and the remaining 55.5 percent were female. It can be implied that the frequency of the female respondents is higher than the frequency of the male respondents. The respondents were divided into 4 age groups as 15-20 years, 20-30 years, 30-40 years, and 40 and above. Out of the total 110 respondents, 8.2 percent were of age group 15-20 years, 53.6 percent were of age group 20-30 years, 21.8

percent of 30-40 age group and the remaining 16.4 percent were of age group 40 and above. The classification of respondents by educational qualification indicates the level of education respondents are currently pursuing or have completed. Among 110 respondents, 32.7 percent of them were in secondary level or have completed secondary level, 44.5 percent of them were in undergraduate level or graduated and the remaining 22.7 percent were in postgraduate level or have completed post-graduation.

Table 2 also shows that the occupation of the respondents was categorized into 6 categories as student, business owner, employee, housewife, unemployed, and others. Out of a total of 110 respondents, 20 percent were students, 14.5 percent were business owners, 33.6 percent were employees, 10 percent were housewives, 9.1 percent were unemployed and the remaining 12.7 percent were involved in other occupation. Income level was divided into four levels not earning, up to Rs 10000, up to Rs 20000, and more than Rs 20000. Out of 110 respondents, 23.6 percent were not earning, 18.2 percent were earning up to Rs 10000, 32.7 percent were earning up to Rs.20000 and the remaining 25.5 percent were earning more than Rs.20000. Respondents were given options that represented the frequency of buying green products and were asked to choose according to their buying behavior. The frequency of buying green products by the respondents are 20.9 percent of the respondents are regular user as they always purchase green products, 34.5 percent of the respondent buys often, 30.9 percent of the respondent buys sometimes and the remaining 13.6 percent buys rarely.

Sources of Information about Green Products

Respondents were given options regarding sources of getting information about green products and were asked to choose one from where they get information.

Table 3

Sources of Information about Green Product

Sources	Frequency	Percentage
Advertisement	41	37.3
Word of mouth	26	23.6
Peer group/ friends	16	14.5
Past experience of use	18	16.4
Shopkeeper's recommendation	9	8.2
Total	110	100

Source: Survey, 2022

Table 3 reveals the sources from where consumers get to know about green products. Out of surveyed 110 respondents, 37.3 percent were getting information from advertisements,

23.6 percent were informed from word of mouth, 14.5 percent were informed from peer groups/ friends, 16.4 percent were informed from the experience of use, and the remaining 8.2 percent were getting information from shopkeeper’s recommendation. The reliable source of information is advertisement so that applied advertisement tools for convincing consumer. The past study of Sdrolia and Zarotiadis (2018) argued that green products as “a product (tangible or intangible) that minimizes its environmental influence (direct and indirect) during its whole life-cycle, subject to the existing technological and scientific status about environment and promotion activities.

Consumers’ Knowledge about Various Features of Green Products

Table 4

Consumers’ Knowledge about Various Features of Green Products

Features of green products	Frequency	Percentage
Environmental friendly	105	95.5
Bio-degradable	62	56.4
Recyclable	44	40.0
Made with natural ingredients	82	74.5
Energy efficiency	33	30.0
Eco-friendly packaging	46	41.8
Free of toxic chemical	55	50.0
Healthy and safe	94	85.5

Source: Survey, 2022

Table 4 displays that most of the respondents understood green products as environmentally friendly products. 85.5 percent of the respondents viewed green products as healthy and safe products, 74.5 percent viewed green products as products produced with natural ingredients, 40 percent considered green products as recyclable, and 56.4 percent conceived green products as biodegradable. A greater number of respondents knew other features of green products like energy efficiency, eco-friendly packaging, and free of the toxic chemical. The past study of Grunert (1993) concluded Green products are the products that seek to maintain quality and protect or enhance the environment during production, use, or disposal by conserving resources and minimizing the use of toxic agents, pollutions, and waste. It offers potential benefits to the environment and human health, same result presents this study also.

Price of Green Products

Respondents were asked to share their opinion regarding the price of green products.

Table 5 represents consumers' judgment based on a five-point Likert scale towards the price of green products. The analysis reveals that the majority of respondents (37.3 percent) were not sure about whether green products are overpriced or not 31.8 percent of respondents concluded that green products are not overpriced and the rest 31 percent think the opposite of that. In the 2nd statement, 39.1 percent of the respondents were not sure whether green products are expensive as increased price doesn't add any benefit to it or not. 38.2 percent of respondents concluded that green prices are not expensive as increased prices add benefit in it and the remaining 22.7 percent accepted that green products are expensive as increased price doesn't add any benefit in it. In the 3rd statement, 43.6 percent of respondents were not sure about whether they are willing to pay more for green products or not. 35.5 percent of respondents were willing to pay more for green products and the remaining 20.9 percent were not willing to pay more for green products. In the 4th statement, 62.7 percent of respondents were ready to purchase green products in case of the same price as non-green products. 24.5 percent were not sure of purchasing green products in case of the same price of non-green products and the remaining 12.7% of respondents were not agree to purchase green products in case of the same price of non-green products.

The same result was explored by Thapa (2019) to examine consumer level of awareness and perception towards green products in Nepal. The research work established that an increasing number of consumers have adequate knowledge about green products features and delivers a prerequisite for the marketer to increase their seriousness to focus more on making the consumer more aware about green products benefits and bring about the adoption of green products as affordable and price friendly.

Table 5

Customer Perception Regarding Price of Green Products

Statements	Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Average (SD)
Green products are affordable than conventional products.	Strongly disagree	5	4.5	3 (.967)
	Disagree	30	27.3	
	Neutral	41	37.3	
	Agree	28	25.5	
	Strongly agree	6	5.5	

Green products are too expensive as increased price doesn't add any benefit in it.	Strongly disagree	6	5.5	
	Disagree	36	32.7	
	Neutral Agree	43	39.1	
	Strongly agree	22	20.0	2.82
I am willing to pay more for green products.		3	2.7	(.911)
	Strongly disagree	5	4.5	
	Disagree	18	16.4	
	Neutral	48	43.6	
	Agree	29	26.4	3.19
Purchase of green products in case of same price of non-green products.	Strongly agree	10	9.1	(.972)
	Strongly disagree	4	3.6	
	Disagree	10	9.1	
	Neutral Agree	27	24.5	
	Strongly agree	43	39.1	3.70
		26	23.65	(1.045)

Source: Survey, 2022

Quality of Green Product

Respondents were asked to share their opinion regarding the quality of green products. Table 6 shows the consumer's perception concerning the quality of green products. Consumers' perception towards the quality comparison between green products and conventional products suggests that a significant part 70 percent of the consumers believed that green products offer better quality compared to conventional products. 20.9 percent of them were unaware of this matter and 9 percent of them showed their disagreement. In the second statement, a larger portion 62.8 percent of the consumer know the longevity of green products, a considerable percentage 26.4 percent of them were unaware regarding this matter and 10.9 percent of them believe that green products are not durable as conventional products.

Table 6

Customer Perception Regarding Quality of Green Products

Statements	Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Average (SD)
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Green products are of better quality than conventional products.	Strongly disagree	5	4.5	
	Disagree	5	4.5	3.85
	Neutral	23	20.9	(1.033)
	Agree	46	41.8	
	Strongly agree	31	28.2	
Green products are durable.	Strongly disagree	4	3.6	
	Disagree	8	7.3	3.75
	Neutral	29	26.4	(1.044)
	Agree	40	36.4	
	Strongly agree	29	26.4	
Green products have partial effect or side effect.	Strongly disagree	24	21.8	
	Disagree	30	27.3	2.56
	Neutral	29	26.4	(1.138)
	Agree	24	21.8	
	Strongly agree	3	2.7	
I would recommend green products based on quality to my friends.	Strongly disagree	4	3.6	
	Disagree	7	6.4	3.89
	Neutral	18	16.4	(1.017)
	Agree	49	44.5	
	Strongly agree	32	29.1	

Source: Survey, 2022

In the third statement, a larger part 49.1 percent of the consumer was aware that green products don't have a partial effect or side effect. 26.4 percent of the consumers were unknown and 24.5 percent of the consumers believe that green products have side effects. In the fourth statement, 73.6 percent of the consumers were agreed to recommend green products based on quality to their friends, 16.4 percent of the consumers were neutral and 10 percent of consumers were disagreed to recommend green products based on quality to their friends. As same as past study also concluded Grunert (1993) green products are the products that seek to maintain quality and protect or enhance the environment during production, use, or disposal by conserving resources and minimizing the use of toxic agents, pollutions, and waste.

Availability of Green Products

Respondents were asked to share their opinion towards the availability of green products. Table 7 shows that consumer opinion about the availability of green products when they consider buying. 53.6 percent of the respondents assumed that green products are not readily available when they want to buy and 23.6 percent of the consumers' opinion was that green products are available easily to buy. A larger portion of the consumer 50.9 percent was agreed that there is a small variety of green products compared to conventional products. 32.7 percent of the consumers were neutral and 16.3 percent of the consumers' opinion was that there is a large variety of green products compared to conventional products. The same concern was drawn by Shrestha (2020) concerted and coordinated efforts are highly required from the government with the broad participation of all stakeholders for market availability. The government merely is not responsible for controlling environmental issues.

Table 7

Customer perception regarding availability of green products

Statements	Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Average (SD)
Green products are not easily found in grocery stores compared with conventional products.	Strongly disagree	4	3.6	3.40 (1.068)
	Disagree	22	20.0	
	Neutral	25	22.7	
	Agree	44	40.0	
There is a small variety of green products compared with conventional products.	Strongly agree	15	13.6	3.24 (0.971)
	Strongly disagree	4	3.6	
	Disagree	14	12.7	
	Neutral	36	32.7	
	Agree	44	40.0	
	Strongly agree	12	10.9	

Source: Survey, 2022

Customer Purchase Intention towards Green Products

Respondents were asked to share their opinion regarding purchase intention while buying green products

Table 8

Customer Purchase Intention

Statements	Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Average (SD)
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I take environment consideration into account while buying green product.	Strongly disagree	4	3.6	
	Disagree	6	5.5	
	Neutral	23	20.9	
	Agree	53	48.2	3.79
	Strongly agree	24	21.8	(.96)
While buying I read products label to see if contents are eco-friendly.	Strongly disagree	5	4.5	
	Disagree	10	9.1	
	Neutral	44	40.0	
	Agree	40	36.4	3.38
	Strongly agree	11	10.0	(.94)

Source: Survey, 2022

Respondents were asked to share their opinion regarding purchase intention while buying green products. Table 8 shows that most consumers 70 percent like to take environmental consideration intensely while buying green products. 20.9 percent of the respondents are neutral and 9.1 percent of the respondents don't like to take environmental consideration into account while buying green products. The majority of the 46.4 percent also prefer to find out whether the product's contents are eco-friendly or not. 40 percent of respondents are neutral about reading products label to see if contents are eco-friendly or not and 13.6 percent are disagreed to see products label to find. Shreatha (202) conducted reserarch work and concluded that the government solely is not responsible for controlling environmental issues. Therefore, Nepalese people are gradually showing concern towards eco-friendly products. Consumers' knowledge and willingness to lead a healthier lifestyle and preserve the fragile environment are rising (Shrestha, 2020).

Key Concerns of Respondents towards Green Products

Respondents were asked to tick their key concern they keep in mind while buying green products. Table 9 illustrates that among 110 sampled respondents, 44.5 percent of them were concerned with the long-term health benefits of green products, 8.2 percent focused on durability, 22.7 percent on safety and less polluting, and the remaining 24.5 percent were concerned with eco-friendliness and energy efficiency of green products. Same buying concern pays the consumers in the past while buying green products. (Aggrawal, 2010) Consumers' perceptions can affect the decision-making process and buying behavior of individuals. Thus, every individual consumer has their way to understand green products and consumers' perception about the green product is significant in guiding the green consumer purchasing

behavior by health consciousness and sustainable factors environment. Findings of the study also indicate that most of the respondents give key attention to health consciousness before purchasing green product.

Table 9

Key Concern of Respondents

Concerns	Frequency	Percentage
Long term health benefits	49	44.5
Durability	9	8.2
Safety and less polluting	25	22.7
Eco friendliness and energy efficiency	27	24.5

Source: Survey, 2022

CONCLUSIONS

The majority of the respondents were using green products very frequently however; consumers were only buying a few green products which have direct benefits such as organic food, herbal medicines, and electrical appliances. Advertisement and word-of-mouth communication are observed to be the leading sources from where consumers get information about green products. From the analysis, it is found that the majority of the respondents were agreed to purchase green products even after the increase in its price up to a certain limit through consumers’ knowledge about various features is not so clear about the various benefits of green products. Customers have mixed opinions concerning the price of green products. The majority of the customers agreed that green products are not convenient to buy in grocery stores and they are in small variety compared with conventional products.

The majority of the customers have a positive attitude towards the quality of green products as they were in favor of recommending green products further to their friends and relatives based on their quality. But consumers were very negative regarding the promotional strategies taken by the marketer to communicate various benefits of green products. It has been also found by the study that environmental safety and eco-friendly product contents are the important factors that drive the consumer to buy green products. At last, it has been concluded that customer perception towards green products is negatively concern with the price of green products and positively concerned with the quality, availability, and promotion strategy of green products.

The main contribution of the study provides some insights to Marketers who should

take initiatives in educating consumers about green products and promote in such a way that makes consumers more aware about several features, benefits, and price of the products and get interested to buy the products. Product positioning messages used by marketers need to be more explicit and green claims should be more convincible. It also contributes to environmental issues; strict rules and regulations should be enforced by the government to protect the environment. Marketers and manufacturers should focus on the improvement of the quality of green products and making it convenient to buy through increasing its availability and accessibility.

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