

## Consumer Awareness of Green Marketing and Buying Behavior: A Synthesis of Literature<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to present the systematic review of the literature on green marketing. Green marketing is a burning issue in the global environmental protection context and it is necessary matter to discuss our consumption behavior, business patterns, and national policy to support environmentalism. As consumer and society become more concerned about natural environment, modify their buying behavior in an attempt to address their well-being. This study has synthesized the specified literature related to consumer awareness and their buying behavior in environmental marketing. The review of literature is based on limited theoretical and empirical studies. Based on the literature, the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between the green awareness of consumers and their buying behavior. In addition, green information and promotion activities help to increase the level of green awareness that leads to a change the green buying behaviour in marketing practices. Green consumers play a vital role in the protection of the environment.

**Keywords:** Buying behavior, consumer awareness, green consumers, green marketing, green product

### Introduction

Consumer awareness and buying behavior are the most important aspects of marketing in any business, society, and nation. First, awareness refers to the capacity to

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recognize, experience, or be conscious of events, objects, or sensory experiences (Indirani, 2016) and similarly, Chartrand (2005) has defined awareness is a factor that arises in human automatic processes, where automaticity can involve actions that are either conscious or unconscious. Second, consumer buying behavior refers to the act of selection, purchasing, and consumption of goods and services for their wants or needs satisfaction (Ramya & Ali, 2016) and it is concerned with factors that influence product purchase decisions and product usage. Therefore, the awareness of consumers plays a vital role in changing their buying behavior; it means that consumer buying behavior is significantly associated with consumer awareness.

In the present context, many more philosophies, principles, concepts, approaches, etc., have developed on many issues and challenges of business sectors and human society. One of them is the movement of green environment, or green marketing has spread hugely worldwide. Green marketing is a part of the green environment, which is the process of creating and marketing products and services that have a reduced impact on the environment. The term green marketing, also called environmental or sustainable marketing, originated in 1975 during a seminar on 'Ecological Marketing' organized by the American Marketing Association (Chettri et al., 2020). Ottman (1993) has pointed out that green products include some environmental attributes such as being naturally sourced, biodegradable, non-toxic, not tested on animals, pollution-free, and minimally packaged with natural and approved ingredients. After a long time, today, green marketing has taken a comprehensive approach that emphasizes not only the reduction of environmental harm but also the promotion of sustainability. Peattie (2001) explained that the evolution of green marketing has three phases: ecological, environmental, and sustainable. Ecological green marketing is the first phase which was concerned with conducting marketing activities with remedies for ecological problems; the second phase was environmental green marketing, and focus shifted to clean technology; and the third phase was sustainable ecological marketing, popularized in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Therefore, the green philosophy inspires green product's production process with environment-friendly technology, protection of energy, conservation of the environment, minimum use of natural resources, and sustainable green marketing.

In this green marketing revolution, many companies are supporting and taking some actions to save and preserve the environment in the present situation (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009). Similarly, many more environmental protectionists and experts are

deeply concerned about environmental issues and play a crucial role in enhancing the environment whenever possible (Barr & Gilg, 2006). In addition, consumers also must be aware and make green consumers. Consumers who purchased green products or who were more aware of environmental issues and their buying behavior were influenced by environmental concerns (Shrum et al., 1995; Yeonshin & Sejung, 2005; Shabani et al., 2013). In raising the green awareness condition, the demand for green products and concepts promptly rises when environmental awareness, governing pressure, public health, and safety concerns for eco-technology in manufacturing procedures (Srinivas, 2015).

Compared to developed countries, Nepalese consumers have much less awareness of environmentally friendly products. The most important attention of green marketing is to help control environmental degradation. Nepal has not been free from environmental degradation issues and green marketing approaches. Nepal is said to be adversely affected by the impacts of rapid climate change occurring worldwide. The country has different socio-political consequences and unique geographical characteristics related to climate change and environmental problems. Recently, Nepal government has also adopted a green financing policy, which supports learning green for post-COVID economic recovery (Bhandari, 2020).

Similarly, Nepalese consumers have not accurate green information in the markets for their consumption of eco-friendly products (Ghimire, 2019). In this situation, studying consumer awareness and green buying behaviour is significant. Different concepts and approaches have been presented to identify the patterns of green buying behavior by marketing experts and researchers. This study aims to review the theoretical and empirical works of literature regarding consumer awareness and purchase behavior in distinct research patterns toward green marketing.

### **Methodology**

This descriptive study aims to understand the theoretical and empirical studies on consumer green awareness and buying behavior regarding green marketing. Globally, many more theories and models have developed of consumer behavior, and several empirical studies and surveys have been conducted on the consumers' awareness and its impact on buying behavior regarding green marketing. Therefore, the present study is specified to review the model, theories, and empirical studies that are related only to green awareness of consumers and its influence on buying behavior. This study uses a

systematic review approach and it makes an effort to collect and synthesize the review of nearly about seven theoretical models and about twenty empirical studies. The study addresses a practical review from 1996 to 2022 AD, and it also supports Nepalese green marketing practices. This study synthesized literature in two categories: theoretical and empirical review.

### **Theoretical review**

On March 22, 1989, the Basel Convention was held to control cross-border movements of hazardous wastes and its disposal in Basel, Switzerland. The primary aim of this convention was to safeguard human health and the environment from the harmful effects of hazardous waste. The convention gripped cooperation between parties, exchange of information on relevant issues, implementation of the agreement, providing technical assistance, and mostly support to developing countries (Basel Convention, 1989). Indian government has introduced the Environment (Protection) Act 1986. The primary objective of the act was to ensure protection and promote the enhancement of the environment. Similarly, the government launched the eco-labeling scheme 'Eco mark' in 1991 to easily identify environment-friendly products for consumer awareness. Therefore, the government of India has started promoting green marketing and eco-friendliness innumerable ways, namely, prescription of plastic bags for daily use, support to the automotive industry to develop greener or electric vehicles, promoting green building construction, imposing firms to adopt policy which protects the consumers' well-being by reducing harmful products, create the realization of more socially responsible (Shrikanth et al., 2012).

In Nepal, Environment Protection Act, 2019 (2076 BS) and Environment Protection Rules, 2020 (2077 BS) have been implemented by the Nepal government, and those addressed in the preamble to safeguard the fundamental right of every citizen to enjoy a clean and healthy environment. Similarly, the act and rules focused on maintaining a suitable balance between environmental and developmental functions, reducing negative impacts on the environment and biodiversity, while addressing the challenges presented by climate change. UNDP (June 1, 2022) has published a policy paper on green financing in Nepal advocating for the promotion of green investments to drive green growth, fostering resilient, equitable, and sustainable development. Recently, the government of Nepal and the World Bank have signed a concessional financing agreement for green, resilient, and inclusive development (Kathmandu Post, September

2, 2022). Therefore, the government should play a significant role in promoting environmental protection activities and necessary to force the implementation of rules and regulations for a green environment.

The most important aspect is self-awareness of people and its significant impact on green buying behavior. Thus, some approaches and models have been described regarding consumer awareness and buying behavior. Chartrand (2005) has broadly explained the model of an automatic process in his study. He noted that awareness is a factor that arises within human automatic processes, where automaticity can encompass both conscious and unconscious actions. The Howard Sheth model (Howard & Sheth, 1969) has described the four stages (input, perceptual, and learning constructs, outputs, and external variables) involved in the consumers' buying process. It can be linked to green behaviors as inputs refer to green marketing messages, and consumers have received the green information first through various channels. In this second step, the consumer has transferred input materials into psychological, perceptual, and learning constructs. Output is the customer's green behavior or resulting actions influenced by green marketing messages, social stimuli, and internal psychological attributes. The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model (Engel et al., 1968) has demonstrated that consumer behavior and information exposure are significantly associated with the individual's memory. Memory has processed the input information, and the result has influenced the decision process. Several influencing factors have been related to consumer purchase decisions and behavior. This model supports the green marketing perspective; individual differences elements, namely, income, time spent, an additional amount of money to pay, knowledge, green awareness, green attitudes, and green values, have a positive relationship with the purchasing behavior of the green product. Similarly, the Value-Attitude-Behaviour model (Homer & Kahle, 1988) has assumed that values influence behaviors both directly and indirectly through attitudes, which means attitudes mediate between values and behaviors relationship. This model has enhanced firms' understanding of the causal relationships among the variables and aids in the development of green marketing strategies.

The theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) is associated to voluntary behavior and suggests that individual behavior is determined by intents that are motivated by an attitude toward the individual's behavior and subjective norms influence behavior performance. In green marketing, attitudes toward green products and subjective norms

are significantly associated with the purchase intention and behavior towards green products. The positive attitude of green marketing supports green purchase behavior, and several studies have pointed out that a positive attitude toward environmentally sustainable products contributes to sustainable consumption (Chan, 2001; Verbeke & Viaene, 1999; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Another popular theory of planned behavior, which is an updated extension of the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 1991). It has been added that perceived behavioral control is the personal feeling and awareness of potential challenges they may face when engaging in a specific behavior. Much more studies have been conducted on green marketing context based on the theory of planned behavior and shown that positively linked with green purchase intention (Stavros, et al., 1999; Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005; Han et al., 2009; Chen & Tung, 2014; Chang et al., 2014; Moser, 2015). The Black Box model (Kotler et al., 2004) has stated that customers are individual thinkers who process internal and external stimuli to make purchase decisions. All stimulus factors (inputs) enter the consumer's black box and are processed in their mind (black box). The black box consumer behavior model can be linked with green buying behavior. The model identified the stimuli responsible for green buyer behavior. The stimuli (advertisement and other forms of promotion about the green product) presented green information to the consumer (buyer's black box) and its support to make them aware and change their positive attitude. The buyer's black box formations enhance the response of green behavior or motivate them to purchase green products.

### **Empirical review**

Consumers' environmental consciousness influences on their purchasing and the outcome of the study suggested that attitudes were the most consistent predictor of pro-environmental purchasing behavior (Schlegelmilch et al., 1996). Similarly, Ziadat (2009) has exposed that the level of education and age of university students played a significant role in the degree of environmental awareness. Boztepe (2012) suggested that marketers should prioritize raising consumer awareness about green products and their beneficial effects on the environment. In addition, the study examined that environmental awareness; features of green products, green promotion activities, and green prices were positively associated with consumers' purchasing behaviors and had a moderate effect on demographic variables. Likewise, Aminrad et al. (2013) have focused that more knowledge and awareness have supported to increase in positive attitudes toward the environment of the students which may achieved from the families, teachers, media,

literature, and school curriculums. Correspondingly, Hussain et al. (2014) have pointed out that consumers' awareness of price and brand image had a significant impact on their decision to purchase green products. Moreover, brand image awareness has strongly and positively influenced consumers purchasing decisions. Maheshwari (2014) has investigated consumer beliefs and attitudes towards environmental protection and their buying behavior of environmentally friendly products. The study identified that consumers were not exposed enough to green product marketing communication and low levels of consumer awareness about global warming in Indian markets. Equally, the increase in the curiosity and exploration scores increased environmental awareness, and there was a significant relationship between environmental awareness and environmental attitude (Saricam et al., 2015).

Raghuvanshi, M. (2016) declared that knowledge and awareness were important components of formal or informal environmental education. He has suggested that green practices were necessary to the learning phase and make the normal routine of ecological education. Likewise, a study found that green marketing tools (consumer environmental concerns, green consumption behavior, environmental advertisement, green product & price awareness, and awareness of economic brand image) significantly impact on consumer buying behavior (Shamim & Ali, 2017). An empirical study specified that consumers' awareness of green marketing has a significant influence on buying behaviour of consumers, and it has suggested that marketers should use recyclable materials for packaging, ecological labels, and biodegradable energy during the process of production period for developing a green business culture (Fouziya & Gracious, 2018). Thapa (2019) scanned out contents of environmental safety and eco-friendly products were the important factors that motivate consumers to purchase green products. In addition, a study has suggested that marketers should offer promotional activities of several features, benefits, and prices of green products which support more consumer awareness and interest in buying the products. Ghimire (2019) has highlighted that Nepalese consumers have not obtained accurate green information in the markets for their consumption of green products, and he suggested that green information should be provided through various media to build a positive perception of consumers towards green products. A study engrossed the very difficult task of changing students' attitudes toward favors of environments. Thus, increasing individual knowledge and awareness, positive attitudes were supported to preserve the environment (Razak et al., 2019). Similarly, an empirical



study identified a significant relationship between environmental awareness, green promotion, green value, and green pricing in relation to consumer purchasing behavior. The study suggested that green promotional marketing activities were supported to sell environment-friendly products and function effectively (Chettri et al., 2020; Ibrahim, 2020; Appadurai & Manivannan, 2022). Tran et al. (2022) observed that personal behavior was influenced by environmental awareness except for the Knowledge and decision attitude of the environment. Moreover, the findings of the study showed awareness and personal behavior have a positive impact on environmental teaching activities.

### **Results**

According to the previous model, the Engle-Kollate-Blackwell model of consumer behavior (Engel et al., 1968) has supported that green knowledge has influenced consumer awareness and attitudes; these variables have significantly changed the buying behaviors towards green marketing. The model of automatic process (Chartran, 2005), Howard Sheth model (Howard & Sheth, 1969), and Black box model (Kotler et al., 2004) have focused that information source or input or stimuli factors have influenced the consumer's mind and attitudes which were shown to reflect the output or buying behavior. It is clear that sources of green information or stimuli are significantly associated with consumer awareness, and green awareness has changed green buying behavior. Similarly, the value attitude behavioral model (Homer & Kahle, 1988), theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1969), and theory of planned behavior model (Ajzen, 1991) have reinforced that attitudes to the green product have influenced consumer buying behavior, and in addition, source of green awareness (subjective norms and value generator factors) have associated with green buying behaviors.

An empirical review of the literature has incorporated that the Awareness factor deals in a different way with human behavior, and more studies support the significant relationship between consumer awareness and buying behavior (Schlegelmilch et al., 1996, Boztep, 2012; Hussain et al., 2014; [Fouziya](#) & [Gracious](#), 2018; Chettri et al. 2020). Likewise, green product awareness is a critical factor significantly affecting green purchasing decisions (Siddique & Hossain, 2018). Tran et al. (2022) have simplified that environmental awareness influences personal behavior. Thus, the above studies have clarified that consumer awareness positively influences green buying behavior. It is



necessary to think about increasing consumer awareness and changing their ordinary purchase behavior into green buying behavior for environmental protection.

### **Conclusion**

A clear vision came of the green marketing and environmental protection concept from a seminar in 1975 by American Marketing Association. Subsequently, scholars undertook research studies focused on areas of environmental protection. Much more studies have been found related to environmental awareness in different countries worldwide; among them, more descriptive studies were conducted on measuring the level of consumer perception, attitude, and environmental awareness in the South Asian context. Various studies have contributed to the relationship between awareness of environmental concerns, green products, green promotion, green price, brand image, and purchase intention. Therefore, it is clear that consumer awareness is significantly associated with buying behavior toward green marketing. Green information plays important role to make aware about green product. Consumer should be made green consumer and support to green behaviour in marketing practices. Consumer awareness can build a positive attitude, which leads to shifting the buying behavior towards green products. This changing behaviour has contributed to the support of the green revolution to prevent further environmental destruction.

### **Implication**

Based on the above review, the study must be needed for consumer awareness and green buying behavior in the Nepalese market. Very few studies have been found about green marketing areas and poor implementation of green policy nationwide. Thus, this study will support explore the status of green marketing in Nepal. Moreover, the present study will be encouraged to investigate consumer awareness and its impact on buying behaviour towards green products in Nepal. The study's results will be important to consumers, business firms, government units and eco-environment related organizations to understand that the level of environmental awareness can be changed in consumer purchase behavior to green products, and this green behavior will be contributed to environmental protection. Therefore, green information and promotion activities are essential tools for increasing awareness of green marketing. The study may be useful to academicians and research scholars to reference for further studies.

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