

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR FOR GREEN PACKAGED PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

Green packaging refers to using packaging materials that minimise the adverse effects on the environment. These materials are reusable and have the ability to biodegrade or be composted. Businesses and institutions are increasingly adopting green packaging to highlight their dedication to the environment and fulfil governmental as well as consumer demands. However, terms like ‘green packaging’, ‘eco-friendly packaging’, and ‘sustainable packaging’ can confuse consumers trying to grasp the underlying notion. Furthermore, factors such as environmental consciousness, product availability, and price are expected to influence consumer purchasing behaviour towards environmentally friendly packaged items. The primary goal of this study is to identify the elements that impact consumer buying behaviour towards green packaging by examining past research studies and available literature. The study is qualitative in nature based on 20 research papers from reputed journals. The papers were identified from various online digital libraries such as EBASCO. The critical independent and sub-

variables were identified from the research papers to develop the proposed research model. The study findings are anticipated to offer valuable insights to packaging material suppliers and diverse businesses for their forthcoming sustainability endeavours. The findings may also provide valuable input for future scholars interested in conducting similar studies in various geographical locations.

Keywords—*Green packaging, sustainable packaging, eco-friendly packaging, consumer purchase behaviour*

INTRODUCTION

Two-thirds of the 430 million tons of plastic generated every year is used for very brief periods of time [1]. This includes products like PET water bottles and shopping bags, straws, and food containers made of plastic. Fortunately, there is an increasing desire for sustainable consumption, including non-plastic alternatives like green packaging.

According to United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Green packaging, otherwise known as sustainable packaging

refers to packaging, which limits the harm done to the environment. In academic study, green packaging is sometimes known as sustainable or eco-friendly packaging; nonetheless, the fundamental understanding is that green packaging reduces environmental pollution while providing sustainable value without compromising the functioning of traditional packaging [2]. Across the globe, governments and non-governmental organisations are advocating for the use of environmentally friendly packaging materials to mitigate environmental damage.

For many stakeholders, using green packaging materials has presented both benefits and challenges. Determining if end users are aware of and concerned with the environment is crucial. Many items in the market claim to use sustainable or green packaging. This research aims to comprehend how consumers perceive and choose green packaged goods. This study aims to provide novel variables, such as price sensitivity and brand image that are expected to impact consumers' purchasing decisions regarding environmentally friendly packaging. In addition, unlike other articles, this study has not only identified sub-variables but also anticipated outcomes from the proposed model, along with the measures needed to ensure its comprehensiveness. The research gaps, questions, and objectives of the study can be summarised as follows.

RESEARCH GAPS AND OBJECTIVES

Research Gaps

An initial literature review for this study identified four independent variables based

on the research gaps observed: i) brand image, ii) price sensitivity, iii) cultural norms, and iv) environmental benefits. The related literature study helped identify the following research problems and questions.

- What is the impact of brand image on consumer purchasing behaviour for green packaged products?
- How does price sensitivity influence consumer purchase behaviour for green-packaged products?
- How do cultural norms impact consumer purchase behaviour for green packaged products?
- How does consumers' perception of environmental benefits affect their decision to buy green packaged goods?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To identify the variables that enhance brand image, resulting in consumer loyalty and influencing consumer purchase behaviour for green packaged products.
- To determine the factors that impact price sensitivity leading to consumers' willingness to pay for green packaged products.
- To identify the factors that affect cultural norms while purchasing green packaged products resulting in social acceptance.
- To identify the factors impacting consumers' perceived environmental benefits of green packaged products that ultimately result in a better

ecosystem.

This study aims to investigate and analyse existing

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research entails the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as text or video for understanding ideas or real-life experiences. It has the potential to be employed to develop novel research ideas. Observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys and secondary research are some of the most common qualitative research methods used in research studies. For the purpose of this study, secondary research method was adopted, which

involved screening of various existing

research papers. From the many articles screened, 20 were shortlisted to establish the research gaps and create the research framework as mentioned in the Figure 1 above. The keywords provided above were used to search for papers in reputable Journals. Only the articles that explicitly stated limitations and areas for future research were further examined. The articles were analysed using Dr. A. Seetharaman's patented (2021) excel worksheet format to ascertain the research gaps and discern the independent and sub-variable.

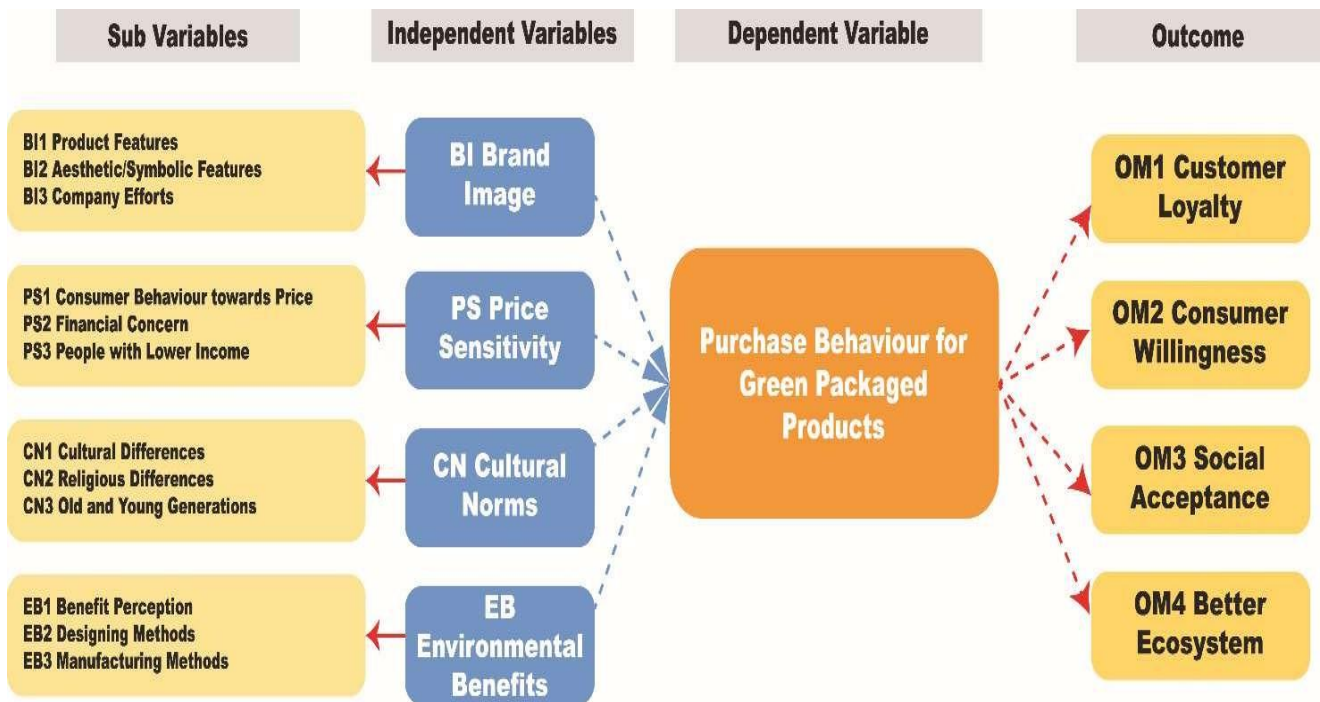


Figure 1 Research framework (Source: Author)

Research's limitations and issues to determine the factors impacting consumer purchase behaviour for green packaged products

Research Framework and Scope

This study focuses exclusively on consumer purchase behaviour for green packaged products. It does not explore the technical aspects of green packaging; hence, the research scope is limited to investigating and analysing the various factors that impact the consumer purchase behaviour of green packaged products.

Additionally, it examines the potential results or outcomes of green-packaged product purchases and outlines some measurement criteria that might be used to evaluate these outcomes. This study used research papers from the last five years from various online digital libraries such as EBASCO. The scope of this research is qualitative in nature.

DISCUSSIONS, OUTCOME AND PROPOSITION

Brand Image

According to the study conducted by reference [3], green packaging and branding have a significant impact on green purchase intention. This is supported by substantial prior research about how a green brand image can positively influence purchasers' decisions because it makes the brand distinctive [3]. Findings also confirm that perceived green value boosts reliability and trust together with purchase intention [4]. The company's perceived environmentally friendly reputation acts as a mediator between many elements and

consumers' inclinations to make environmentally conscious purchases. An extensive examination of the pertinent literature reveals that the following elements are essential for creating a brand image:

- Product features
- Aesthetic/symbolic features
- Company efforts

Product features

According to reference [5], consumers were unwilling to sacrifice product quality for more environmentally friendly food packaging. In addition, some consumers were not completely satisfied with the food packaging's reduced shelf life when it was more environmentally friendly. These findings indicate a need for a balance; furthermore, customers are not entirely prepared to make compromises in certain areas to facilitate the use of sustainable packaging [6].

Aesthetic/symbolic features

The product's aesthetic features sometimes influence consumer's perception of brand image. According to a study, packaging material not only affects the perception of sustainability but also affects other views, such as the aesthetic quality of the product and its perceived ability to preserve the contents [7].

Company efforts

According to Waites et al., consumers are more inclined to purchase from companies that effectively implement green marketing strategies than from those that do not prioritise their environmental impact. The correlation is facilitated by trust in the

company. Moreover, demonstrating prosocial behaviour seems to validate the organisation's efforts and promotes the development of trust [8].

Outcomes and measures

Consumer satisfaction is achieved when individuals obtain desired items and services at an appropriate price and quality. This, in turn, contributes to establishing a favourable brand perception in customers' minds. Brand image is a predecessor to consumer loyalty [9]. Consumer loyalty has the potential to result in higher revenue and greater client lifetime value over an extended period. Consumer loyalty can be measured with the help of metrics such as Customer Lifetime Value and Repeat Purchases.

Proposition 1

Brand image significantly influences consumer purchase behaviour of green packaged products, leading to consumer loyalty supported by product features, aesthetic/symbolic features, and company efforts.

Price Sensitivity

Buying environmentally friendly products has been demonstrated to be substantially influenced by their economic value [10]. Price sensitivity has a negative moderating effect on the conversion of purchase intention into actual purchase of green items [11]. Therefore, firms may want to adjust the prices of their products according to the purchasing power of consumers. A comprehensive review of the literature indicates that the following factors significantly influence price sensitivity:

- Consumer behaviour towards Price

- Financial concerns
- People with lower income

Consumer behaviour towards price

The intention to purchase green products is significantly influenced by the premium and pricing of green products. However, according to research, it is anticipated that a substantial number of consumers are prepared to pay a premium for environmentally friendly products [3].

Financial concerns

Contrary to popular opinion, a study has demonstrated that consumers, purchase intention for green products is not adversely influenced by their higher prices. They regard the price premium as an additional measure of environmental worth [5].

People with Lower Income

Individuals with lower incomes exhibit less inclination towards buying products with environmentally friendly packaging due to the perception of higher costs and heightened price sensitivity [12].

Outcome and measures

While some consumers are ready to pay a higher price for environmentally friendly packaged products, others prioritise good value for their money. By considering the consumer's price sensitivity and effectively communicating the environmental advantages of green products, firms can anticipate consumers' willingness to pay the asked price for their products. This can result in increased revenue and accelerated growth.

Proposition 2

Price sensitivity significantly influences consumer purchase behaviour of green packaged products, resulting in consumers'

willingness to pay, supported by consumer behaviour towards price, financial concern, and income level.

Cultural Norms

Cultural disparities between nations impact the perceived efficacy of consumers and hence influence their environmentally conscious purchasing behaviour. A thorough comprehension of the psychological and behavioural factors that influence green customer behaviour is crucial for successfully implementing a green marketing mix [5]. Cultural norms are significantly influenced by the following factors, as evidenced by a comprehensive examination of the literature:

- Cultural differences
- Religious differences
- Old and young generations

Cultural differences

Cultural characteristics, such as individualism and collectivism, are significant factors in comprehending green consumer behaviour as they influence individuals' perception of their ability to contribute to social issues [5].

Religious differences

Religion significantly influences cultural distinctions in several regions of the world. Businesses must comprehend and exhibit a high level of awareness towards consumer sentiments to succeed in these regions. For example, according to one study it was found that incorporating religious symbols into advertising in Egypt might have negative effect and be ineffective [13].

Old and young generations

A study revealed significant differences in both the level of collaboration and the inclination to uphold societal norms of collaboration between two adult generations: individuals in their twenties and individuals with an average age of 67 years [14]. The young consumers' decision to transition from synthetic plastics to biodegradable ones is mainly influenced by novelty seeking, adventure, and concern for the environment rather than their knowledge, particularly about environmental issues [15].

Outcome and measures

Businesses must understand cultural aspects to make their products socially acceptable in a particular area. For instance, despite considerable benefits from their protein content, consuming insects in whole or powder form is still not widely accepted in Western countries, according to studies [16]. As mentioned in various studies, tools such as a stakeholder survey or analysis may be helpful to measure social acceptance of a product.

Proposition 3

Cultural norms have a significant influence on the consumer purchase behaviour of green packaged products, resulting in their social acceptance with the influence of cultural and religious differences and old and young generations.

Environmental Benefits

Consumers must possess knowledge about the specific environmental advantages offered by a product in order to make an ecologically mindful purchasing decision. Environmental awareness enhances the association between environmental concern and a company's perceived green image [17]. A thorough examination of the

literature indicates that the following criteria determine the perception of environmental benefits of green packaged products:

- Benefit perception
- Designing methods
- Manufacturing methods

Benefit perception

A study demonstrates that the type of packaging material not only significantly influences the perception of sustainability but also has an impact on other aspects, such as the perception of aesthetic quality and the potential ability to protect and maintain the contents [7]. As per Waites et al., companies that effectively use green marketing strategies experience more intentions to purchase compared to those that do not prioritise environmental impact. Furthermore, trust in the company influences this connection [8].

Designing methods

Designers possess a distinct capability and obligation to utilise their abilities, knowledge, and impact to promote beneficial environmental transformation. Design methodologies that prioritise efficiency, minimalism, and using ecologically sustainable materials experience increased popularity [18].

Manufacturing methods

Implementing environmentally friendly production practices can not only reduce waste and mitigate climate impact but also enhance firms' reputation for sustainability and positively influence consumers' purchasing decisions, thus increasing future sales [17].

Outcome and measures

According to Zhu et al., packaging is traditionally designed, manufactured, consumed, disposed of, and burnt or buried in landfills. The circular economy strives to minimise waste by preserving resources in a closed loop, minimising the negative impact on the environment. This necessitates packaging design innovations, as 80% of environmental impacts are determined during design, including material selection, production, consumption, reuse, and recycling [19]. Green product knowledge positively affects green product buying behaviour and customer attitudes toward green products [20], which can help improve the ecosystem. The indicators of a healthier ecosystem include decreasing air and water pollution and landfill waste, and increasing recycling rates.

Proposition 4

Environmental benefits perception has a significant impact on consumer purchasing behaviour for green packaged products, leading to a better ecosystem, influenced by benefits perception, designing methods and manufacturing methods.

RESEARCH.IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SCOPE

Research implications

- Contribution to theory

The research model proposed in this study endeavours to incorporate innovative factors, such as brand image and price sensitivity and their influence on customer buying behaviour. Based on the identified criteria, future researchers might formulate and test various hypotheses to statistically validate the research findings.

- **Contribution to practice**

The study findings can assist businesses in devising appropriate packaging strategies towards their sustainability efforts. For example, companies can use study findings to develop appropriate “green” packaging as well as position their brand against competition with the help of right marketing strategies. The study highlights importance of other aspects such as price sensitivity and cultural norms which the businesses need to take care of in their green initiatives.

Limitations

The following are the limitations of this study.

The study is qualitative in nature and based on a restricted review of research papers. Therefore, the results of the investigation lack statistical verification.

- The findings may not be generalizable since the research model is based solely on the reviewed research articles. Moreover, consumers from different parts of the world are expected to exhibit varying purchase behaviour towards green packaging due to various factors such as cultural or subjective norms, availability or price sensitivity.
- Due to limited evaluation of papers and time constraints, the study has discovered only four independent variables and three sub-variables per independent variable. It may have failed to consider the effects of other significant variables that have not been evaluated.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future researchers can consider the

following suggestions.

- Conduct a comprehensive study by thoroughly reviewing more research publications.
- Perform primary research and statistically validate the results.
- Conduct a study focusing on a particular product category or geographic location to enhance the accuracy of the findings. Consider other factors such as government interventions and green packaging availability that may influence consumer behaviour.

CONCLUSION

Environmental awareness is growing. Businesses are using sustainable techniques to meet consumer demands, government laws, and corporate social responsibility. This study revealed consumer-focused characteristics that can help companies create eco-friendly packaging. The findings also showed how each element might considerably affect critical outcomes. Businesses should improve their green brand image while considering price sensitivity. It is vital for them to analyse how consumers perceive the environmental advantages provided by their products and how cultural standards influence this view.

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