

## **A Contemporary Issue on Eco -Friendly Consumerism in Mathura city**

**Dr. Anil Saxena**

*Chartered Accountant Associate Professor, Deptt. of A/c & Law  
Faculty of Commerce , K.R (P.G.) College, Mathura*

---

### **Abstract**

*The environment has been exploited by companies in a number of ways to fulfil their objectives. So, it becomes the responsibility of companies to compensate for this damage. Producing environment-friendly products and creating awareness among consumers are some of the ways through which companies can contribute towards conservation of nature. An attempt has been made in the present study to compare the attitudes of males and females as well as urban and rural consumers towards various dimensions of environment-friendly products viz., raw material, production, packaging, in- use features, after-use features and environment-friendly product. The study reveals that there does not exist any significant difference in attitudes of gender-wise people except after-use features of environment-friendly product. Urban people have more favorable attitude towards environment-friendly products than their rural counterparts. People residing in urban areas have also come up with favorable attitude towards raw material, packaging and after-use features of environment-friendly products*

**Keywords:** *Environment-Friendly Products, Rural Consumers, Eco -Friendly Consumerism*

---

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Environment is essential for the growth and survival of all living beings. But unfortunately environment has fallen prey to mankind. Nature is being degraded by the activities undertaken by companies. Hence, it becomes the responsibility of the business world to compensate for the harm that the companies are causing to environment. The companies are employing a number of ways to preserve the natural environment. This ethical step helps the companies to become more disciplined about their environmental performance and contribute towards nature's conservation- Environmentally responsible companies make themselves more attractive to customers and investors.

Fuller (1999) observed that the challenge is to reinvent the ways and means of delivering desired customer benefits and meeting organizational goals while leaving no discernible environmental footprints on the planet. The companies are addressing this issue and playing their part in preserving the nature. Producing environment-friendly products is indeed one of the ways to conserve the environment.

Environmental product issues are complex; it includes the environmental impact of the entire life cycle of the product. Any product that is made, used or disposed of in a manner that significantly reduces the harm that it would otherwise cause to the environment, can be considered as environment-friendly product.' Companies make specific changes in the product development, manufacturing, promotion and distribution so that the products do not harm the environment.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India had launched eco- labeling scheme known as 'Ecomark' for easy identification of environment-friendly product in 1991.2 The criteria follow a cradle to grave approach, i.e. from raw material extraction, to manufacturing and final disposal. The basic criteria not only cover the broad environmental' aspects but also the aspects that are specific at product level. According to the ministry a product is examined in terms of following main environmental impacts:

- That they are substantially less potential for pollution than other comparable products in production, usage and disposal.
- That they are recycled, recyclable, made from recycled products or biodegradable, where comparable products are not.
- That they make significant contribution to saving nonrenewable resources including nonrenewable energy sources and natural resources compared to comparable products.
- That the product must contribute to a reduction of the adverse primary criteria that have the highest environmental impact associated with use of the product and which will be specifically set for each of the product categories.

The Government of India has specified 17 different product categories for ecomark scheme. Out of the 17 product categories, licenses for only three categories have been obtained by 12 manufacturers--' The failure of Ecomark is not surprising as it is a voluntary measure. Another problem accounts for the investment needed

to reach the high stringency standards of ecolabel. The manufacturers do not find it profitable as the awareness of ecomark among consumers is very low.

Manufacturing is the phase of product life 'cycle where the transformation from raw material to the product takes place. Usage of material should be minimized in this stage. The production process should have efficient energy consumption. Wastage or toxic release should be reduced and effluents treated well before their release into the environment-for packaging recycled or recyclable content should be used. Excessive and unnecessary packaging of the product should be avoided to save the packing resources. Refills can be used for packaging of the product.

During the usage of the product by the consumers, energy consumption should be efficient. The companies should educate the customers about how to use the product so that its negative impact on nature could be minimized. Consumer health and environmental safety should be the priority of the product.

## **II. Review Of Literature**

Concern for environmental issues has gained significance during the last two decades. Researchers have investigated the phenomena from different perspectives. Some of the research studies emphasize on awareness of eco-friendly products and attitude towards environmental issues. Research has also focused on the demographic, social and cultural variables which affect the behavior and attitude of consumers towards environmental issues.

Scherhorrt (1993) examined the consumer's concern about the environment and its impact on business. Study highlights that majority of consumers feel that this is a serious problem and that one should really do something about it. Far fewer consumers indicate that they have changed their behaviour or are seriously willing to revise it. Not more than 40% can be taken to be pro-environment in their actions, as opposed to their attitudes.

Sriram and Forman (1993) studied the relative importance of product's environmental attributes in a cross-cultural comparison. The results confirmed that the American consumers attach enormous importance to the recyclable feature of the milk package, whereas for the Dutch this was only of moderate importance. In case of washing machines, to both groups, the environmentally friendlier energy ' criterion was of little consequence and they were willing to live with a less efficient machine which had other features they wanted. Both placed great value to the type of deodorant and on whether it was tested on animals. The Dutch strongly preferred the aerosols which were not animal-tested. Moreover, they were willing to pay the highest price in order to have these desired features.

CUTS (Consumer Unity and Trust Society) (1997) conducted a survey for the Ministry of Environment and Forests (India). The study focused on the consumer attitude and knowledge-practice regarding the environmental pollution and ecomark scheme. The study also highlighted the manufacturer's awareness and willingness to go for eco-labeling in India. The general trend brought out the fact that the maximum tendency has been to pay less than 10% premium for any particular product. As far as the manufacturers are concerned, the study highlighted that 43% of manufacturers contacted had effluent treatment plants. Out of these, only 40% had the capacity of treating 100% of the discharged pollutants. The awareness of the Indian ecomark scheme exists merely amongst 30% sample respondents.

Jain and Kaur (2004) undertook a study of attitudinal and behavioral analysis of Indian consumers regarding environmental issues. Survey results revealed that people believe in genuineness of sudden rise in environmental concern. The government, politician and lack of enforcement of laws were found to be responsible much for the environmental problems. Respondents had uneven knowledge about various environmental issues, developments and legislations.

On the personal level respondents positively affirmed that they had been influenced by green communication campaigns. They exhibited willingness to take environment- friendly actions, seek environment-related information and pursue activities that conserve the environment and prevent pollution. People hardly engage in environmental activism. They think that there is hardly anything that they can do at their level about the environment.

Review of literature reveals that the investigators have focused on some demographic and socioeconomic variables which exhibit differences in attitudes and behavior of the consumers towards environmental issues. Since the results of the studies are contradictory, further probe is required. In the present study an attempt has been made to study the attitude of the respondents towards environment-friendly product.

### **The objectives are:**

- To study and compare the attitude of urban and rural people towards environment-friendly products.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **SAMPLE**

The sample was drawn from The nearby Areas in Mathura and around it. The sample consisted of 400 respondents with 100 respondents each, from all the four areas. Each area was divided into four strata. Simple

stratified sampling was used to select the areas in each zone: 25 respondents were taken up from each strata using convenient sampling technique. In total 200 respondents each were taken from urban and rural areas. Around 243 males and 157 females were included in the sample.

**SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS**

To study and compare the attitude of the average age of the sample was 31 year’s males and females towards (Table 1) with standard deviation Rs. 16,000 per month with SD of Rs. 12,600 in the study. The average size of the family was 4.86 members per unit with SD of 1.81.

		Age (Years)	Monthly Income (Rs. '000)	Family Size (No. of Persons)
Gender (Male)	Mean	34.10	14.30	4.97
	SD	12.2	11,700	2.06
Gender (Female)	Mean	26.00	18.50	4.69
	SD	8.65	13,600	1.33
RS (Urban)	Mean	28.80	20.70	4.34
	SD	10.70	14,600	1.47
RS (Rural)	Mean	33.10	11.20	5.39
	SD	12.10	7,730	1.96
Total	Mean	31.00	16.00	4.86
	SD	11.60	12,600	1.81

Note: SD – Standard Deviation, RS – Residential Status.

**TOOLS USED**

For the present study data were collected with the help of Likert type 5-point scale consisting of 30 items. Various dimensions of environment-friendly products, i.e., raw materials, manufacturing process, packaging, in-use features and after-use features were included in the study. The attitude towards environment-friendly product was taken as the sum total of attitude towards various dimensions of environment-friendly product. The questionnaire was administered individually to all the respondents. Doubts regarding the statements were duly clarified by the researcher. In order to achieve the objectives taken up in the study, two-way ANOVA with sources of variation gender and Residential Status (RS) was used.

**HYPOTHESES**

In the light of the review of literature, following hypotheses have been formulated.

H1: Males and females are likely to differ on attitude towards environment-friendly product.

H2- Respondents belonging to urban and rural areas are likely to differ on attitude towards environment-friendly product.

**III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of present study (Table 2) show that males and females have similar attitude towards raw material of environment- friendly products as the F value is non significant. For RS, the F ratio (5.13) is significant at 0.05 level. It can be concluded that the urban people have more positive attitude towards the raw material of environment-friendly product. Urban people take care of the ingredients of environment-friendly product. They also try to study the ingredients of the product before using it. The interactive effect of gender and RS has yielded insignificant F ratio.

Table 2: Summary of 2-Way ANOVA for Attitude Towards Various Dimensions of Environment-Friendly Product			
Dimensions of EFP	Source of Variation	F Value	P
Raw Material	Gender	0.50	0.48
	RS	5.13	0.02
	Gender X RS	0.15	0.70
Manufacturing Process	Gender	2.21	0.65
	RS	0.76	0.39
	Gender X RS	0.36	0.55
Packaging	Gender	0.08	0.78
	RS	5.61	0.02
	Gender X RS	0.51	0.48

Table 2 (Cont.)

Dimensions of EFP	Source of Variation	F Value	P
In-Use Features	Gender	3.30	0.07
	RS	0.09	0.76
	Gender X RS	0.85	0.36
After-Use Features	Gender	4.22	0.04
	RS	16.15	0.00
	Gender X RS	0.56	0.46
Environment-Friendly Product	Gender	1.04	0.30
	RS	5.34	0.02
	Gender X RS	0.006	0.94

Note: EFP - Environment-Friendly Product, Gender - Male/Female, RS - Residential Status - Urban/Rural.

Both the sources of variation, i.e., gender and RS have yielded non significant F ratio for the measure attitude towards Environment-friendly Product; RS - Residential Status. Environment-friendly product shows that the F ratios for both the sources of variation i.e., gender and RS and interactive effect of gender and RS has yielded F ratios which are non significant in nature.

Table 2 shows that the F value for dependent measure attitude towards after- use features of environment-friendly product for the main source of variation i.e., gender is 4.22 and significant at 0.05 levels of probability. It is evident from the results that the females have more favorable attitude towards the after-use features of environment-friendly product as compared to males; thereby, indicating that females try to pay attention to the way of discarding the product so that its adverse impact on environment is minimized.

The mean values for males and females for after-use features are 10.44 and 10.86, respectively (Table 3). Similarly, the F- value for the second source of variation, RS has also yielded significant F ratio 16.15 which is significant at 0.01 level. So the people residing in urban areas have more favorable attitude towards the after-use features of environment-friendly product as compared to their rural counterparts, as the mean value for urban and rural people equals to 11.06 and 10.24, respectively (Table 3).

Table 3 (Cont.)

Dimension of EFP	Residential Status	Gender (Male)	Gender (Female)	Overall Mean
In-Use Features	RS (Urban)	27.29	27.58	27.44
	RS (Rural)	26.90	27.78	27.34
	Overall Mean	27.10	27.68	27.39
After-Use Features	RS (Urban)	10.77	11.35	11.06
	RS (Rural)	10.11	10.37	10.24
	Overall Mean	10.44	10.86	10.65
Environment-Friendly Product	RS (Urban)	74.37	75.29	74.83
	RS (Rural)	72.52	73.30	72.91
	Overall Mean	73.45	74.30	73.87

Note: EFP – Environment-friendly Product; RS – Residential Status.

Hence urban people, like females, try to focus on method of discarding the product. They also feel that correct method of discarding the product should be informed on the package of product. However, the interactive effect of gender and RS has not resulted in significant F ratio for the dependent measure attitude towards after- use features of environment- friendly product.

The scores for attitude towards environment-friendly product were found by adding the attitude towards various dimensions. The main source of variation gender has yielded F ratio which is non significant in nature for attitude towards environment-friendly product. The second source of variation, RS has resulted in significant F ratio equal to 5.34, which is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The mean values for urban and rural people are 74.83 and 72.91, respectively (Table 3). This shows that the urban people have more favorable attitude towards environment- friendly product, as compared to the people residing in rural areas. Moreover, the interactive effect of gender and RS has failed to yield significant F ratio. The ratio equals to which is non significant for the above said variable.

#### IV. FINDINGS

On the basis of findings, H<sub>0</sub> is rejected, whereas H<sub>1</sub> is accepted- The present study proposes that females have more favorable attitude towards the after-use features of environment-friendly product as compared to males. Females try to discard the product in a proper manner that reduces the harmful effect on environment. The males and females have similar attitude towards environment-friendly product. But there is difference in attitude of urban and rural people. Urban people have favorable attitude towards raw material, packaging and after-use features of environment- friendly product than their rural counterparts. They believe that environment-friendly products have appropriate raw material, packaging and after-use features.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Urban people try to be more conscious about the raw material, packaging and after-use features of environment-friendly product. The people residing in urban areas have more favorable attitude towards the environment-friendly product. The reason may be that urban people have greater exposure to the happenings around the world. Also, the urban people encounter the environment problems more as compared to their rural counterparts. Environment is indeed a major issue before us and we need to respect and protect the environment.

#### REFERENCES

- [1]. Antil John H (1984), "Socially Responsible Consumer: Profile and Implications for Public Policy", Journal of Macro marketing, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 18-39.
- [2]. Icfai Journal of Marketing Management Vol.IX, No. 1, 2010
- [3]. Arbuthnot Jack (1977), "The Roles of Attitudinal and Personality Variable in the Prediction of Environmental Behavior and Knowledge", Environment and Behaviour, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 217- 232.
- [4]. Brooker George (1976), "The Self- Analyzing Socially Conscious Consumer", Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 3, September, pp. 107-112.

- [5]. Buttel F Hand Flinn Wk(1978), "Social Class and Mass Environmental Beliefs: A Reconsideration", Environment and Behavior, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 433-450.
- [6]. CUTS (Consumer Unity and Trust Society) (1997), "Concept Testing of Green Consumption", A Study for the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, New Delhi.
- [7]. Das R P and Nath Vikas (.2003), "Environment Marketing in Indian Fast Food Industry: A Study", Paradigm, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 117- 125.
- [8]. Fuller D (1999), "Sustainable Marketing: Managerial Ecological Issues", Thousand Oaks, California and Sage Publications, New Delhi.