

PROMOTING ECO-FRIENDLY CONSUMPTION THROUGH STRATEGIES WHICH INFLUENCE SOCIAL AND PSYCHOGRAPHIC FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

An evaluation and understanding of the available literature in a given subject and a compilation of the knowledge so gained, can help in formulating effective policies and strategies. This study presents 'AVAILE'- a framework of strategies for promoting sustainable consumption developed by the authors on the basis of review of literature. This framework resulted out of an evaluation of literature focusing on factors that influence the adoption of sustainable products and the policy recommendations for impacting these factors. This framework 'AVAILE' an acronym for six 'consumer-centric' strategies, covers all possible actions that can be taken by policy makers and marketers aiming to promote sustainable consumption and eco-friendly products. It shall not only work as a toolkit for them due to its comprehensive and unique structure but also be a valuable addition to the extant literature.

Keywords: *Environment-friendly Behavior, Green Product Awareness, Emotional Appeals, Sustainable Behaviour, Green Products.*

Introduction

An evaluation and understanding of the available literature in a given subject and a compilation of the knowledge so gained, can not only give very important insights on the concerned field but also can lead to the development and formulation of effective policies and strategies. A literature review is both a summary and explanation of the complete and current state of knowledge. The present paper is a descriptive and evaluative presentation of information found in the literature related to sustainable consumption that has helped the authors to recommend a policy framework. On the basis of findings in literature, 'AVAILE' a strategy-framework for promoting green consumption has been suggested by the authors of this study.

Sustainable development aims to protect the environment while simultaneously promoting sustainable consumption and economic growth. The last decade has seen a noticeable increase in focus on sustainability throughout the world. This focus and the related actions to promote sustainable products and lifestyle practices have been accelerated further by the targets set up by UN in the form of Sustainable Development Goal 12.

The consequences of consumption practices and consumer patterns lead to environmental degradation and threaten the world's sustainability. These factors are internal or external, psychological or social, work individually or together, directly or indirectly to influence the consumer behaviour. Internal factors or psychological factors include concern for environment, green- attitude, generativity, perceived

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consumer effectiveness, awareness about products, eco literacy, moral and social ethics, cultural and religious beliefs, respect for environment and its elements. The current study attempts to design a framework to choose the most suitable marketing strategy for green products.

Literature Review

This research stems expands upon previous studies and effectively presented the strategies marketers and policymakers can employ to nurture and promote sustainable behavior.

Sustainable consumption can be defined as the practice of using resources and consuming goods and services in a way that minimizes negative impacts on the environment not only for the present but also for future generations. It involves making conscious choices and adopting eco-friendly products that behaviors that conserve resources and prevent degradation of the environment. The considerations of consumers when using green products are significantly different from those of conventional product(Chang et al., 2020);Tseng & Hung, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to understand what influences or limits customers' preferences for green products and which of these aspects can be targeted to influence consumers' behaviour. Human conduct and actions are at the root of environmental issues facing the world (Diep Le, 2021) Modifying individual, organizational, and group behaviour can, therefore, bring about changes to the environment. This calls for changes in lifestyle, culture and attitude voluntarily by consumers or through some interventions, policies and actions by marketers and policy makers.

The lack of knowledge about green products and their availability are important factors affecting their consumption which further poses a challenge to businesses manufacturing eco-friendly products. A study by Sharma & Joshi, (2017)revealed that awareness about green products among educated and young consumers is more and firm must focus on communicating usefulness of their products in protecting natural environment. This study also highlighted that the consumers should be made aware of the importance of eco certificates and the individual benefits of green products. Similar other studies explored the values and motivations underpinning actual sustainable consumption and found that promoting such products is effective if the sustainable aspect is highlighted in the communications to consumers (Bailey et al., 2016 ;Grimmer & Woolley, 2014) ; Spielmann, 2020).Studies highlighted the importance of education and knowledge in promoting sustainable consumerism. Based on a survey of individuals aged between 18 and 26 years in Italy, it was found that because of the increasing demand of sustainable foods, manufacturers are adopting many sustainability claims, certifications, messages and other information tools to differentiate their goods(Annunziata et al., 2018).It was revealed in this study that visibility of sustainability labels on the products was low and so was the understanding of these labels.People's attitudes and behaviours tend to change if you emphasise both the personal advantages and the larger environmental benefits of sustainable products and practices(Lai & Cheng, 2016; Maichum et al., 2016).Understanding the attitude of people and invoking concern for environment is an important strategy for promoting eco-friendly products. (Zanni et al., 2018; Kharbanda et al 2022). Along with economic benefits, responsible consumers also look for reliability of the green product and its environmental benefits (Lim, (2017; Sachdev, 2011;(X. Zhang & Dong, 2020)

Communications that highlight benefits of green products can bring in more positivity and less stress in the minds of consumers, encouraging them to purchase green products. The environmental degradation caused by daily practices of unsustainable consumption need to be emphatically highlighted through advertisements and through inclusion in curricula at all levels of education. Other factors impacting consumption of green products include environmental concern, ethics, a feeling of moral obligation to society, and green attitude, advertisements, expert opinion and label information. (Akhtar et al., 2021.

Internal individual factors like motivation, environmental concern, ethics and external factors like references from friends and family, label, community, information about the product from various sources influence adoption of eco-friendly products(Widjojo & Yudianto, 2015).Altering the behaviour of the society as a whole, towards a conscious and responsible consumption is a long term process that can be brought about by various marketing and political factors in addition to individual factors (Lubowiecki-Vikuk et al., 2021).A study by Policarpo & Aguiar, (2020 indicates that "... the decision to buy green products is more likely when it involves signaling prosocial reputation, such as buying a hybrid car"

Generally, higher perceived inconvenience is expected to be associated with a negative attitude towards green purchasing (Barbarossa and De Pelsmacker, 2016; Gleim et al., 2013; N. Nguyen et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2019). Thus, the authors of the current study recommend 'consumer centric' strategies of green marketing or actions that aim at minimizing these inconveniences associated with

purchase of eco-friendly products and adoption of sustainable practices. If the experience of social values outweighs the inconvenience of buying green products, the consumers are motivated to buy green products.

Marketing Framework ‘AVAILE’

The literature review clearly led to an inference that promoting green consumption requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses various aspects of consumer behavior and incorporates strategies from extant literature in the field. The authors have identified various factors that influence sustainable behaviour and also the recommendations by various researchers across the globe in literature spanning more than a decade. The compilation led to emergence of a framework named AVAILE which gives a summary of all the possible strategies for promoting sustainable consumption in the long run. It includes all the possible practical and cognitive steps that can challenge any negative factors and harness any positive ones that impact the consumer purchase intention and actual consumption behaviour. It is kind of tool kit to guide the marketeers, practitioners and policy makers. The authors propose that by focusing on each of the following steps, green consumption can be enhanced. It is a circumvention of all possible determinants of consumer behaviour towards green products and green consumption.

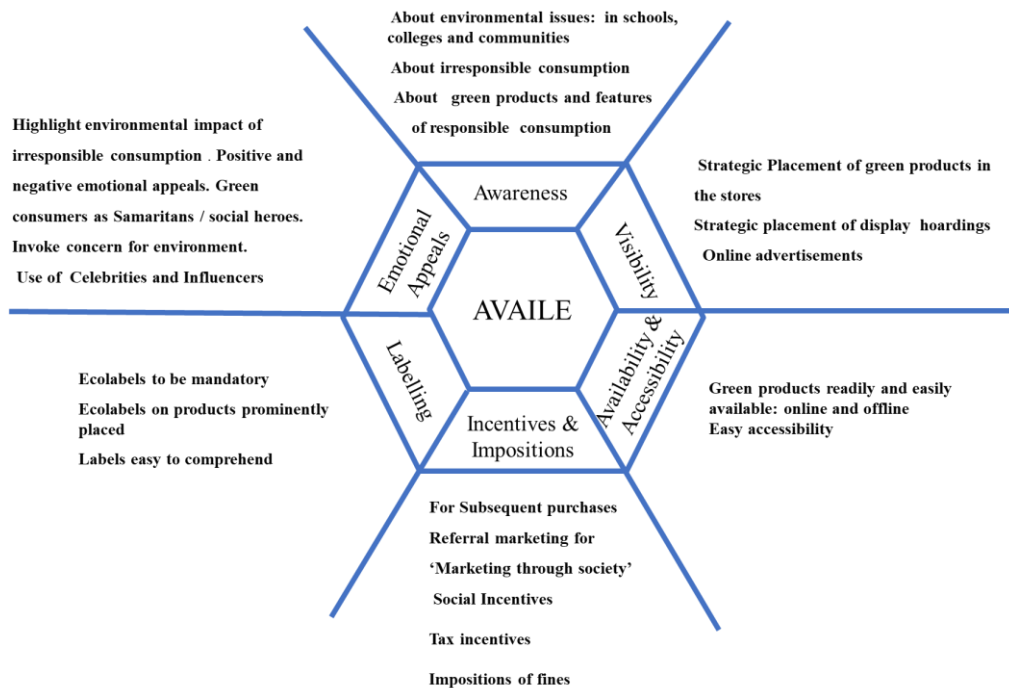


Figure 1: AVAILE-Framework for Promoting Sustainable Consumption

A-Awareness:.. Awareness can lead to integration of sustainability ideals into local knowledge and adoption of sustainable practices. (Y. Li et al., 2016)(Vieira et al., 2019); (L. Zhang et al., 2019, Munerah et al., 2021).The intention and consumption behaviour is also influenced by the ‘generativity’ which refers to individuals’ belief that their current behaviors have consequences that extend into future generations”. (Afridi et al., 2021)

Increasing awareness about the environmental impact of consumption patterns and educate consumers about sustainable alternatives through public campaigns, advertisements, and educational programs focusing on the benefits of green consumption. An early start by including the eco literacy in curricula of schools and taking it further to college shall have a lasting impact on consumer attitudes. Green product awareness (GPA) –includes awareness about green products existing in the market and secondly, knowledge about features of green products and their impact on the environment.

Information and education play pivotal roles in promoting green behavior. Lack of understanding and confusion regarding the impact of green products can hinder the demand for sustainable alternatives, even when consumers possess a genuine intention to purchase.

V- Visibility of Green Products through placement of products at strategic places in the store can be a big contributor to promoting eco-friendly consumption. The placements of products strategically, at eye level on shelves catches the attention of prospective buyers. Strategic placement of display stands for product hoardings in the stores and more visibility through online advertisements. (Bhatti & Negi, 2018; Gleim et al., 2013; Larsson & Muhammad Arif Khan, 2011) The more visible they are, the more impactful in breaking the consumers' habit of consuming conventional goods. To shift the consumption pattern towards green products, these small steps which are cost effective can be useful.

Recommendation: Increase Visibility of messages online and offline about green consumerism, in stores through proper placement of eco-friendly products in stores and prominently visible and attractive displays on stores.

A- Availability and accessibility. Consumer behaviour is sticky and is often governed by habits. The consumers have a tendency to maintain status quo and not come out of their comfort zone. Presence of any strong reason to break the habit or something that comes in easily can lead to a modification of habits.

Recommendation

Investing in the development of sustainable infrastructure, such as recycling facilities, waste management systems, and renewable energy sources shall lead to more environmental consciousness among consumers, which has been seen to positively influence green consumption behaviour. From sellers' point of view, an investment in sales network and an innovative supply chain management focused on increasing availability of products for consumers shall lead to more green consumption. All this, of course, has to be accompanied with good quality and affordable pricing. Large proportion of GPI can be translated to GPB by making the products easily available. Adequate infrastructure can facilitate better accessibility and availability of green products to all sections of society, in various geographical areas and online. This can thus lead to more adoption of green consumption and will act as catalyst in breaking the old consumption habits of the consumers.

- **Incentives and Impositions:** Financial incentives to consumers such as tax benefits, subsidies, and rebates for purchasing eco-friendly products and services. This can help reduce the price differential between sustainable and conventional products, making green options more attractive to consumers. Tax incentives to the green consumers can be one effective strategy especially for products like Electric vehicles, solar plants etc. For example, the consumers who bought Electric vehicles were given tax incentives in some states of USA.

The incentives to consumers can be given by adopting 'marketing through society' or 'referral marketing'. This effectively means, to give incentives for future purchases to those who refer new customers for green products. Along with incentives, fines should be imposed on consumers indulging into irresponsible consumption patterns. For example, if the onetime plastic use is banned by the state, its implementation has to be done strictly through fines and catchy advertisement

- **L- Labeling:** Research has demonstrated that consumers place their trust in eco labels that are provided by the state, government agencies, or third-party organizations. (Kharbanda et al. 2022). Therefore, it is recommended to develop and promote eco-labels and certifications that offer clear and comprehensive information about the environmental attributes of products. For example, labels such as Energy Star, Organic, and Ecomark, can effectively guide consumers towards making sustainable choices and foster trust in green products.

Firstly, making ecolabeling mandatory for manufacturers is crucial. This would require strict guidelines to be imposed, particularly concerning the content of the labels, their size, language usage, third-party or state approvals, and the display of the approving authority's name. By implementing these guidelines, the government and policymakers can prevent instances of greenwashing.

Moreover, it is essential to prioritize the visibility and comprehensibility of eco labels. They should be prominently placed on products to attract consumer attention. Additionally, the labels should be designed in a manner that is easily understandable to consumers, helping them make informed decisions. One significant challenge that needs to be addressed is the low level of awareness regarding eco-labels and symbols on eco-friendly products. This lack of awareness contributes to low trust in green

products. Policymakers must focus on spreading awareness about these labels to promote environmentally responsible consumption. The existing formal system of eco labels provided by government agencies should be expanded and strengthened. Consumer trust lies more with third-party labels rather than manufacturer claims, which highlights the need for a robust and reliable system of eco-labeling.

Skepticism towards manufacturers' claims also contributes to the lack of trust in eco-friendly products. By making eco labels mandatory and enforcing strict guidelines, consumers can have more confidence in the authenticity and environmental credibility of labeled products.

In summary, the recommendation of this study is to develop and promote eco-labels and certifications that provide clear information about the environmental attributes of products. Making eco labeling mandatory, implementing strict guidelines, enhancing awareness about eco-labels, and expanding the formal system of eco labels by government agencies are vital steps in building trust in green products and encouraging environmentally responsible consumption

- **E- Emotional Appeals:** Providing incentives act as short-term tools can serve as catalysts for immediate change, they often fail to instill a lasting commitment. Once the incentives and other benefits are ceased, the consumers are likely to move back to non-green options and practices. This is where the power of emotional appeals comes into play. Marketing of green goods is different from that of conventional non green products and requires to touch the emotions of the prospective consumers. (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). Emotions, guilt, pride, joy experienced post or pre consumption are important factors influencing purchase and consumption of green products (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014; Awasthi & Kumar, 2022; Chen & Hung, 2016; Zeynalova & Namazova, 2022;Kolling et al., 2020)

The emotional appeals need to aim at invoking concern for the environment of consumers through negative or positive messages. Crafting messages that highlight the negative environmental consequences of irresponsible consumption can be effective in changing consumer behaviour or evaluation of behaviour. For example, a message that can present overflowing landfills, polluted air, and contaminated water as a consequence of mindful consumption behaviour, can lead to awakening the environmental consciousness of consumers. Such appeals have the potential to strike a chord with consumers and ignite a concern for the environment and a sense of responsibility. Two key dimensions that influence behavioral change: perceived threat and perceived efficacy. Individuals who perceive a threat as close and severe, and believe that alternative behaviors are effective in dealing with the threat, are more likely to engage in behavioral change. These studies suggested that individuals in the pre-contemplation and contemplation stages were more responsive to a narrative communication format compared to a statistical one. This suggests that storytelling and narratives could be more effective in influencing the perceptions and mindset towards sustainable consumption (Bosone et al., 2023; kothe et al., 2019; Shafiei & Maleksaeidi, 2020)

Based on evidence available in literature, this study proposes that marketing strategy should harness the social factors like image, acceptance, and peer group identity, plays a significant role in the decision to purchase green products Marketers can aim at posturing green products as more socially desirable or 'prestigious' and consumers of these products be glorified as 'Samaritans' or 'social heroes'(Agerup & Nilsson, 2016; Biswas & Roy, 2015; Salazar et al., 2013) especially for young adults and millennials (Annunziata et al., 2018).

Through thoughtfully designed advertisements and campaigns, we can demonstrate how sustainable choices can make a real difference in preserving our planet. Shop with our reusable bags" because "Every time you use one the planet says thanks". This advertisement prominently displayed on a wall of a famous departmental store effectively impacted the mindset of consumers towards sustainable consumerism. It proved to be effective in changing mindset of consumers towards sustainability.

To facilitate the development of enduring habits, the use of 'prompts' proves to be an effective strategy. "Prompts are messages that are delivered before the action of green purchase takes place so as to remind the customer of the benefits of desired sustainable behaviour" (White et al 2019). These messages, serve as gentle reminders of the benefits derived from sustainable behavior. By making these prompts visible, simple to understand, and strategically placed near points of purchase, whether online or offline, marketers can nudge consumers towards greener choices.

Trust acts as a mediating factor in the relationship between green product awareness and green purchase intention. Therefore, increasing eco-literacy among consumers becomes a crucial strategy. By enhancing consumers' knowledge and understanding of environmental issues, the policy makers can empower them to make conscious choices, eliminating uncertainty and reluctance. Effective audiovisual displays and engaging communication can stimulate a shift in consumption patterns and inspire individuals to step out of their comfort zones.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study is that it is based on literature and some studies could have been left out of the review as it was not possible to include all of those. Future researchers can expand the coverage of the review and arrive at conclusions.

By conducting a thorough examination of the consumer behaviour through existing empirical studies, a wide range of facilitators and obstacles to promoting sustainable consumer have been spelled out. These include the conflict between personal and societal interests, the long-term perspective required, the necessity of collective action and the need to replace automatic behaviors with deliberate actions. A limitation of this study is that it is not delving on collective social actions.

Contribution of the Study

This study aimed to explore the historical aspects of marketing thought and their relevance in current marketing practice. The authors have established a structured comprehensive framework that brings together different possible actions which can harness or impact the factors that influence consumer behaviour. One of the main contributions of this study, therefore is providing tools that companies can utilize in order to achieve strategic business objectives along with environmental sustainability

It is essential to recognize that the root of environmental problems lies in human behavior. Thus, the solution must also lie in changing our behaviors, lifestyles, and cultural norms. The framework AVAILE encapsulates all the physical, intellectual, and emotional factors necessary for the adoption of green products. This study thus calls for a collective pursuit of all stake holders to reshape consumer behavior, challenge the status quo, and work for a greener planet.

To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 12, which aims to achieve sustainable consumption across the globe by 2030, it is crucial to implement innovatively and effectively the recommended consumer-centric strategies in 'AVAILE'. This shall be a guide to the practitioners and a valuable addition to the extant literature for future deliberations.

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