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# EXPLORING CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS: A FACTOR ANALYSIS STUDY IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT

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## Abstract

*This study investigates consumer perceptions toward eco-friendly products in the Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu, India, with the objective of identifying key factors influencing green purchasing behavior. Utilizing primary data collected from 100 respondents, primarily graduate and postgraduate students from local colleges, the research employed a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The data was analyzed using factor analysis, which extracted six significant factors: Desire, Trustworthiness, Preference, Ethical Concerns, Awareness, and Social Welfare. These factors reveal that consumer interest in eco-friendly products is shaped by both intrinsic motivations and external influences such as ethical beliefs and environmental awareness. The findings highlight a generally favorable attitude toward sustainable products among educated youth, though limitations related to sample size and geographical scope suggest caution in generalizing results. The study provides valuable*

*insights for marketers, policymakers, and educators aiming to promote environmentally responsible consumption and serves as a foundation for future research in similar semi-urban contexts.*

**Keywords:** Consumer perception, Eco-friendly products, Green marketing, Sustainable consumption, Factor analysis, Environmental awareness, Green purchasing behavior.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, increasing environmental concerns and awareness have significantly influenced consumer behavior, leading to a growing demand for eco-friendly products. Globally, consumers are becoming more environmentally conscious, seeking products that are not only functional but also sustainable in their design, production, and disposal (Ottman, Stafford, & Hartman, 2006). The concept of green consumption has gained prominence as individuals recognize their role in mitigating environmental degradation through responsible purchasing decisions (Peattie & Crane, 2005). Eco-friendly products, often referred to as green or sustainable products, are designed to have minimal adverse impact on the environment and are typically produced using environmentally benign processes (Chen, 2010). Consumer perception plays a pivotal role in the success of these products in the market. However, such perceptions are shaped by a combination of personal values, environmental knowledge, socio-cultural factors, and marketing communications (D'Souza, Taghian, & Lamb, 2006; Gupta & Ogden, 2009). Notably, demographic variables such as age, education, and income also significantly influence attitudes and purchasing behavior toward green products (Laroche, Bergeron, & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001).

In the Indian context, awareness and adoption of eco-friendly products have witnessed a steady rise, especially in urban and semi-urban areas. However, consumer responses can vary greatly across regions due to differences in economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). Tiruchirappalli, a rapidly developing district in Tamil Nadu, presents an ideal setting to examine consumer attitudes toward eco-friendly products, given its blend of urban development and traditional values. This study aims to explore and identify the underlying factors that influence consumer perception of eco-friendly products in

Tiruchirappalli District through a factor analysis approach. By uncovering the key dimensions of perception and behavior, the research seeks to provide actionable insights for marketers, policymakers, and environmental advocates in promoting sustainable consumption.

### **1.1 Eco-Friendly Products**

Eco-friendly products, also referred to as green, sustainable, or environmentally friendly products, are those designed, manufactured, used, and disposed of in ways that minimize their environmental impact. These products aim to reduce pollution, conserve resources, and support ecological balance across their life cycle (Peattie & Crane, 2005). Typically, eco-friendly products are characterized by the use of biodegradable, recyclable, or renewable materials; energy-efficient production methods; minimal packaging; and reduced carbon emissions (Ottman, Stafford, & Hartman, 2006). As sustainability becomes a pressing global concern, eco-friendly products serve as tools for both environmental protection and responsible consumerism (Chen, 2010).

Consumer interest in such products has been growing, influenced by rising awareness about climate change, waste management, and resource depletion (Rahbar & Wahid, 2011). Companies have also increasingly incorporated green marketing practices to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers, reinforcing the market relevance of eco-friendly offerings (Leonidou, Katsikeas, & Morgan, 2013). However, consumer trust in green claims and the perceived authenticity of environmental labels remain critical to purchase decisions (D'Souza, Taghian, & Lamb, 2006). Despite the positive perceptions, challenges such as higher pricing, limited availability, and lack of awareness in some regions hinder widespread adoption, especially in developing countries (Biswas & Roy, 2015). Nevertheless, eco-friendly products represent a key frontier in sustainable development and consumer innovation.

## **2. Review of Literature**

The increasing awareness of environmental issues and the need for sustainable development have led to the rise of green consumerism globally. Consumer perception toward eco-friendly products has emerged as a significant area of academic interest, particularly in the context of emerging economies where environmental consciousness is gradually influencing purchase decisions. Biswas and Roy (2015) explored consumer behavior regarding green products in emerging economies, highlighting that increased environmental awareness, health consciousness, and perceived value significantly shape consumer attitudes. In the Indian

context, especially in semi-urban areas such as Tiruchirappalli, these factors are increasingly relevant as consumers are becoming more environmentally aware but are still price-sensitive and brand-conscious. Green marketing plays a critical role in shaping consumer behavior. Boztepe (2012) identified that environmental concern, perceived consumer effectiveness, and the credibility of green marketing claims influence consumer buying decisions. This suggests that marketing strategies promoting eco-friendly products must be authentic and transparent to earn consumer trust. Similarly, Rahbar and Wahid (2011) found that eco-labels, eco-branding, and environmental advertisements significantly affect purchase behavior when consumers trust the information provided.

Brand-related factors such as green brand image, green satisfaction, and green trust also influence consumer perception. Chen (2010) developed a conceptual framework showing that these dimensions are key drivers of green brand equity. This highlights the importance of corporate image and consumer experiences with green products in forming positive perceptions and loyalty. Consumer trust in environmental labels and certifications is crucial. D'Souza, Taghian, and Lamb (2006) conducted an empirical study demonstrating that credible environmental labels positively influence consumer perception and willingness to purchase green products. However, skepticism toward green claims remains a barrier in many developing regions. Ottman, Stafford, and Hartman (2006) cautioned against "green marketing myopia," where firms exaggerate environmental claims without delivering actual benefits, thus eroding consumer trust. Social and psychological factors also affect green purchasing behavior. According to Gupta and Ogden (2009), consumers often face a social dilemma where personal interests (e.g., lower prices) conflict with environmental interests (e.g., buying eco-friendly products). Their study indicates that social norms and collective responsibility can influence decisions, especially in collectivist societies like India, where social approval matters.

Demographic factors further influence green consumerism. Mostafa (2007) reported gender differences in green purchasing, with women showing more concern for environmental issues. Laroche, Bergeron, and Barbaro-Forleo (2001) found that higher-income and better-educated consumers are more likely to pay a premium for eco-friendly products. In semi-urban areas like Tiruchirappalli, educational campaigns can play a role in influencing less-informed consumers. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) offers a robust framework for understanding eco-friendly behavior. Kalafatis et al. (1999) applied TPB to green marketing and found that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly impact purchase intention. These findings are supported by Kim and Choi (2005), who emphasized the role of environmental concern and perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) as antecedents of green

purchasing in collectivist cultures. Among younger consumers, the perception of eco-friendly products is shaped by peer influence and identity. Lee (2008) highlighted that young consumers are more receptive to green messages and products that align with their self-image. This suggests that marketing targeted at youth in Tiruchirappalli could leverage environmental identity and peer-group dynamics.

Marketing mix elements also play a significant role in shaping green purchase intentions. Mahmoud (2018) and Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Morgan (2013) stressed that integrating green elements into product, price, place, and promotion strategies enhances consumer perception and drives sustainable behavior. This is echoed by Peattie and Crane (2005), who argued that green marketing must go beyond rhetoric to deliver real environmental benefits and value to consumers. Cultural, regional, and environmental contexts further modify how consumers perceive eco-friendly products. Joshi and Rahman (2015) reviewed multiple studies and emphasized the need for localized research to identify factors specific to different regions. In line with this, Wahid, Rahbar, and Shyan (2011) analyzed green purchase behavior in Penang and found that environmental knowledge and personal norms significantly influenced eco-conscious decisions. In summary, consumer perception toward eco-friendly products is multidimensional, influenced by psychological, social, demographic, and marketing factors. In semi-urban districts like Tiruchirappalli, these perceptions are still evolving and require targeted strategies to improve awareness, trust, and affordability. A factor analysis approach, supported by empirical data, can help isolate and understand the key dimensions affecting consumer attitudes and guide marketers and policymakers in promoting sustainable consumption effectively.

### 3. Methodology

This study aims to examine consumer perceptions toward environmentally friendly products in the Tiruchirappalli district and provide actionable recommendations for industry stakeholders, government bodies, and consumers regarding green marketing strategies. To achieve this, primary data was collected using a well-structured and pretested questionnaire administered in person. The survey employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" to measure consumer attitudes and opinions. The study focused on individuals from various Taluks within Tiruchirappalli, primarily targeting graduate and postgraduate students from Bishop Heber College, St. Joseph's College, Jamal Mohamed

College, and other institutions affiliated with Bharathidasan University. The data collection occurred between December 2023 and January 2024, yielding responses from 100 participants, with the majority aged between 20 and 40 years and a gender distribution of 52% female. Most respondents held at least a graduate-level education.

To analyze the collected data, factor analysis was employed as the primary statistical tool. This method allowed the researchers to reduce a large set of observed variables into fewer meaningful factors, identifying the underlying dimensions that influence consumer perceptions toward eco-friendly products. The analysis helped to uncover patterns and correlations between different consumer attitudes and beliefs, offering deeper insights into the drivers of green purchasing behavior. The study is exploratory in nature and addresses a significant research gap, as there is limited empirical research available specifically in the Tiruchirappalli context. However, the findings must be interpreted within the study's limitations, including a relatively small sample size, geographic restriction to Tiruchirappalli, and potential respondent bias. These constraints suggest that while the results provide valuable localized insights, broader generalizations should be approached with caution.

#### **4. Findings**

The gathered data was analyzed using factor analysis, a statistical technique commonly employed to identify underlying relationships among a large set of variables. This analysis was conducted using SPSS software on 23 survey statements related to consumer perceptions of eco-friendly products. Prior to factor extraction, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were performed to verify the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Explanatory factor analysis was then applied to uncover the latent constructs and examine the interrelationships among the key interval-scaled variables. To ensure the reliability and internal consistency of the data, a Cronbach's alpha test was conducted, yielding a value of 0.814, which indicates strong reliability. The data analysis followed a systematic procedure to extract meaningful factors that provide insight into consumer perceptions toward environmentally friendly products.

Table -1 KMO and Barlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	728	
Bartlett Test of Sphericity	Approx chi square	637.78
	df	253
	sig.	.000

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for the dataset is 0.728, which falls within the acceptable range (values between 0.7 and 0.8 are considered good). This indicates that the sample size is adequate for conducting factor analysis and that the correlations among variables are sufficiently compact to yield reliable factors. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity shows a chi-square value of 637.78 with 253 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This significant result rejects the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, confirming that the variables are correlated enough to proceed with factor analysis. Together, these tests confirm that the dataset is suitable for factor analysis, ensuring the extracted factors will meaningfully represent the underlying structure of consumer perceptions toward eco-friendly products.

In this study, orthogonal rotation using the Varimax method was employed for factor analysis. Varimax rotation is preferred when the objective is to obtain factors that are uncorrelated, allowing for clearer interpretation of the distinct underlying dimensions. Factors were extracted based on the latent root criterion, where only factors with Eigenvalues greater than one are considered significant. The analysis revealed seven significant factors with Eigenvalues of 5.166, 1.840, 1.738, 1.406, 1.288, 1.254, and 1.157 respectively, all exceeding the threshold of one. These factors collectively explain 60.219% of the total variance in the data, indicating that the factor solution captures a substantial portion of the information contained within the original variables. Although about 39% of the variance remains unexplained, the results suggest a robust factor structure that reasonably represents the consumer perceptions of eco-friendly products in the Tiruchirappalli district.



**Table 2. Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component							Communalities <sup>b</sup>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
S1	-.092	.205	.272	.008	-.045	<b>.637</b>	.143	.552
S2	.384	<b>.500</b>	.073	.228	.224	.067	.176	.540
S3	.174	<b>.750</b>	-.019	-.144	-.281	.225	.156	.768
S4	.092	.033	<b>.845</b>	-.066	-.013	.070	-.003	.733
S5	<b>.781</b>	.299	-.102	.233	.054	.030	.036	.769
S6	.373	-.102	<b>.447</b>	.244	-.027	.428	-.095	.601
S7	.012	-.034	-.096	.011	.002	<b>.667</b>	-.096	.464
S8	.039	-.024	.007	-.109	<b>.779</b>	.026	-.164	.648
S9	<b>.641</b>	.047	.420	.061	.032	.120	-.030	.609
S10	<b>.723</b>	.138	.049	.090	-.143	.069	-.164	.604
S11	<b>.796</b>	-.058	.089	-.075	.134	-.043	.051	.673
S12	<b>.671</b>	.322	.180	.303	.200	-.051	.141	.740
S13	.151	.076	-.036	.141	.484	<b>.488</b>	.216	.568
S14	.224	.077	.229	<b>.344</b>	.256	.308	.000	.388
S15	-.013	-.017	.276	.296	-.114	-.376	<b>.510</b>	.579
S16	.031	.103	-.121	-.052	.072	.061	<b>.645</b>	.453
S17	.039	.060	.191	<b>.790</b>	.052	.114	-.153	.705
S18	.090	-.013	-.178	.366	<b>.556</b>	-.038	.221	.534
S19	-.033	<b>.473</b>	.274	-.051	.469	-.030	.125	.539
S20	.345	.044	-.243	<b>.623</b>	-.071	-.045	.120	.589
S21	.268	.251	<b>.543</b>	.247	-.023	-.204	-.340	.648
S22	.194	<b>.576</b>	.070	.228	.085	-.029	-.478	.663
S23	.396	<b>.419</b>	-.024	.261	.208	-.060	-.188	.483
Eigenvalues	<b>5.166</b>	<b>1.840</b>	<b>1.738</b>	<b>1.406</b>	<b>1.288</b>	<b>1.254</b>	<b>1.157</b>	
Cumulative Percentage Of Variance	<b>14.917</b>	<b>23.210</b>	<b>31.379</b>	<b>39.512</b>	<b>47.021</b>	<b>54.236</b>	<b>60.219</b>	

The table summarizes the rotated factor loadings for 23 variables (S1 to S23) across 7 extracted components. Each loading represents the correlation between a variable and a component, where higher absolute values indicate stronger associations. Loadings above  $\pm 0.4$  are generally considered significant for interpretation purposes. For instance, variable S5 loads highly on Component 1 (0.781), suggesting that this item is strongly associated with the first factor. Similarly, S3 (0.750) and S4 (0.845) show strong loadings on Components 2 and 3, respectively, indicating distinct underlying constructs captured by these components.

Some variables demonstrate cross-loadings (moderate loadings on multiple components), but in general, many items show a clear pattern of high loading on one component and low on others, suggesting a relatively clean factor structure. For example, S8 loads strongly on Component 5 (0.779), while S7 loads on Component 6 (0.667), highlighting their unique contributions to distinct factors. The "Communalities" column on the far right indicates the proportion of each variable's variance explained by all seven components combined. Higher communalities (closer to 1) suggest that the factor solution accounts well for the variance in

those variables—e.g., S3 (0.768) and S5 (0.769) are well explained, while S14 (0.388) and S16 (0.453) are less so.

Finally, the eigenvalues at the bottom indicate the amount of variance explained by each component, with Component 1 explaining the most (5.166 units, 14.917% of total variance). The cumulative variance explained by the seven components is approximately 60.219%, which is reasonably acceptable in social sciences, indicating a meaningful but not exhaustive representation of the data's variance.

**Table- 3: Factor Naming**

Statement	Factor loadings	Factor names & Variance explained
1. I always prefer product with reusable container.	.796	Desire
2. I purchase a product with environmental safety prospective.	.781	
3. I specifically check recycle label on the back of product.	.723	
4. Eco-friendly product feature motivates me to buy a product.	.671	
5. I always prefer energy saving products when I purchase electronic items.	.641	
1. I am ready to pay a higher price for the eco-friendly products.	.750	Trustworthiness
2. I usually prefer net banking to avoid paper wastage.	.576	
3. I do not like to buy product with excess packaging.	.500	
4. I never buy Products which contain toxic chemical.	.473	
5. Solar light system is a good green product initiative.	.419	
1. I prefer eating organic products available in the market.	.845	Preference
2. An environmentally responsible product become comparatively less expensive when whole life costs are taken into consideration.	.543	
3. I prefer to use CFL lights.	.447	
1. Ecological friendly technologies must be followed by companies in over all working criteria.	.790	Ethical
2. I prefer getting bills on my mails.	.623	
3. Government must frame stringent rules and regulations in support of green marketing and should assure proper implementation of the same.	.344	
1. I do not like plastic bags.	.779	Awareness
2. Specifically ecological products are of good quality.	.556	
1. I prefer to use fuel efficient vehicles.	.667	Initiative
2. I like to use eco-friendly products.	.637	
3. When I am confused about product, I prefer green products.	.488	
1. I want to buy product which are not tested on animals.	.645	Social Welfare
2. Green advertisement doesn't affect my purchase decision.	.510	

The table groups consumer behavior statements into six meaningful factors, each representing a distinct dimension of eco-friendly consumer behavior. The first factor, labeled "Desire", includes items reflecting strong personal inclination toward environmentally responsible products (e.g., checking for recycle labels, preferring reusable containers, or energy-saving items). These items have high loadings (e.g., 0.796, 0.781), showing a strong

correlation with the underlying construct of internal motivation or desire for green consumption.

The second factor, "Trustworthiness", captures consumer behavior influenced by beliefs about reliability, safety, and green responsibility, such as avoiding excess packaging and toxic chemicals, or paying more for eco-friendly products. These moderate to high loadings (0.750 to 0.419) suggest these items collectively reflect trust in green practices and sustainable product claims.

"Preference", the third factor, comprises statements about consumer choices like preferring organic items, CFL lights, and economically viable green products. The loadings (e.g., 0.845, 0.543) imply a behavioral leaning toward such products based on practical or habitual preferences rather than moral obligation.

The fourth factor, "Ethical", relates to regulatory or systemic support for green practices. Items here (e.g., government role, company accountability) indicate the belief that ethical governance and policy frameworks are essential in promoting sustainable consumption. The loadings (e.g., 0.790, 0.623) confirm the salience of ethics as a distinct component of consumer mindset.

The fifth factor, "Awareness", emphasizes the consumer's cognitive engagement with product quality and waste avoidance (e.g., rejecting plastic, valuing eco-quality). These responses reflect environmental knowledge and consciousness, with relatively strong loadings (e.g., 0.779, 0.556).

Lastly, the sixth factor, "Social Welfare", involves a broader concern for animal welfare and the influence of green marketing. Items like avoiding animal-tested products and disregarding green advertisements when making decisions reflect a socially driven environmental ethic. Loadings of 0.645 and 0.510 show this to be a moderately strong factor in shaping behavior.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined consumer perceptions toward eco-friendly products in the Tiruchirappalli district using a factor analysis approach. The analysis identified six underlying dimensions that shape green consumer behavior: Desire, Trustworthiness, Preference, Ethical Concerns, Awareness, and Social Welfare. These factors suggest that consumers' decisions to purchase environmentally friendly products are influenced not only by personal attitudes and

habits but also by trust in product claims and broader ethical considerations. The findings highlight a generally positive disposition among educated young consumers toward green products, particularly when these products are perceived as reliable, ethically produced, and socially responsible.

Although the study provides valuable insight into the local context, it is not without limitations. The relatively small sample size, geographic focus limited to Tiruchirappalli, and reliance on self-reported data introduce some degree of response bias. Consequently, while the findings offer meaningful direction for green marketing strategies, caution is advised when generalizing the results to wider populations. Nevertheless, the study successfully fills an empirical gap in the regional literature and offers a solid foundation for further exploration.

### **Recommendations**

**For Marketers and Businesses:** Firms should clearly communicate the environmental benefits of their products through labeling, branding, and transparent messaging. Ensuring affordability and accessibility of eco-friendly options can further motivate consumer purchase behavior. Marketers should also consider emotional and ethical appeals in campaigns, connecting with consumers' personal values and their concern for the planet.

**For Government and Policymakers:** There is a need for initiatives that enhance environmental literacy, such as incorporating sustainability education in academic curricula. Stronger regulatory frameworks are essential to hold companies accountable for green claims. Additionally, incentive structures—such as tax breaks for producers of eco-friendly goods and discounts for consumers making green choices—could encourage broader participation in sustainable consumption.

**For Consumers:** Consumers themselves must become more proactive in learning about the environmental impact of their purchases. Choosing certified green products, minimizing single-use plastics, and supporting local eco-conscious businesses are key steps. Participation in environmental awareness programs, sustainability forums, and advocacy campaigns can help spread a culture of green responsibility within the community.

### **Implications**

**Academic Implication:** This research contributes to the growing body of literature on green consumer behavior in developing economies, particularly in under-researched regions like Tiruchirappalli. The six-factor model developed can serve as a framework for future studies examining sustainability perceptions in similar demographic contexts.

**Managerial Implication:** The findings provide practical insights for marketers and business strategists aiming to develop or promote eco-friendly products. Understanding which

psychological and ethical dimensions influence consumer behavior allows businesses to design more targeted and effective green marketing strategies.

**Policy Implication:** Government agencies and public policy designers can use these insights to shape programs that align with consumer values. By addressing trust, awareness, and ethical expectations, policymakers can foster stronger public engagement with environmental initiatives and promote long-term behavioral change.

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