

Exploring Eco-Friendly Marketing Approaches for Consumable Goods: Insights from Ernakulam

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Abstract: *This study investigates consumer responses to eco-friendly marketing strategies in the context of consumable goods, with a specific focus on Ernakulam district in Kerala, India. Using a structured survey of 1,500 respondents sampled across urban, semi-urban, and rural zones of the district, the research evaluates consumer awareness, preferences, and purchasing behaviour related to sustainable marketing practices such as green labelling, biodegradable packaging, ethical sourcing, and CSR-driven branding. Statistical tools, including descriptive analysis, chi-square tests, and regression models, were applied to analyse the relationship between demographic characteristics and eco-friendly consumer behaviour. The study found a strong correlation between educational background and sustainability awareness. Urban consumers were more responsive to eco-marketing efforts, while rural participants prioritized affordability. The research concludes that eco-friendly marketing is increasingly relevant but must be tailored to the socio-economic realities of local markets. Findings offer practical insights for businesses seeking to align their sustainability strategies with regional consumer expectations.*

Keywords: eco-friendly marketing, consumer behaviour, sustainable practices, Ernakulam district, green branding

1. Introduction

In recent years, growing environmental concerns have significantly influenced consumer preferences and business strategies worldwide. The increasing awareness about issues such as climate change, plastic pollution, and resource depletion has prompted both consumers and producers to seek sustainable alternatives. As a result, eco-friendly marketing—often referred to as green marketing—has emerged as a crucial approach for companies seeking to align their products, packaging, and promotional strategies with environmental values. This shift is particularly evident in the consumable goods sector, where every day purchasing decisions have a direct impact on ecological sustainability.

Ernakulam, often regarded as the commercial hub of Kerala, presents an interesting context for studying eco-friendly marketing practices. With its mix of urban and semi-urban consumers, a strong retail network, and rising environmental consciousness, the district offers a unique microcosm of changing consumer behaviour in India. The increasing number of environmentally responsible brands, the availability of organic and sustainable products, and local initiatives promoting waste reduction and recycling all underscore this transition.

This study aims to explore how businesses in Ernakulam adopt eco-friendly marketing approaches for consumable goods and how consumers perceive and respond to these initiatives. It seeks to identify the key strategies employed—such as sustainable packaging, eco-labeling, green advertising, and corporate social responsibility—and to assess their effectiveness in influencing consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the research investigates the challenges faced by marketers in implementing sustainable practices and the extent to which consumers' environmental attitudes translate into actual purchasing decisions.

By examining the eco-friendly marketing landscape in Ernakulam, this study contributes to a deeper understanding

of how sustainability and marketing intersect in a regional context. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for businesses, policymakers, and marketers aiming to promote sustainable consumption patterns and foster a greener marketplace.

2. Review of Literature

Green or eco-friendly marketing has gained considerable attention in recent years as both consumers and companies recognize the importance of environmental sustainability. **Polonsky (1994)** introduced the concept of green marketing as a process of promoting products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. His work laid the foundation for understanding how marketing can be aligned with ecological principles. Similarly, **Peattie and Crane (2005)** critically examined the development of green marketing, highlighting its evolution from a niche strategy to a mainstream business approach, though they cautioned that many firms engage in “greenwashing” rather than genuine sustainability efforts.

Akehurst, Afonso, and Gonçalves (2012) explored the determinants of green consumer behavior, concluding that environmental awareness and perceived consumer effectiveness significantly influence purchase decisions. **Grant (2007)** emphasized that businesses must integrate sustainability into their core branding strategies to build authentic connections with eco-conscious consumers. These findings underline that green marketing success depends on both ethical intent and transparent communication.

In the Indian context, **Cherian and Jacob (2012)** found that urban consumers show increasing concern for environmental protection and a preference for eco-labeled products. However, they also noted that lack of product availability and higher costs often deter consistent green purchasing. **Kumar and Ghodeswar (2015)** identified health consciousness, brand credibility, and perceived quality as critical factors driving green consumption in India, suggesting that

sustainable marketing can be profitable when integrated with value-based communication.

Prasad and Pathak (2017) examined Indian consumers' perceptions of eco-friendly products and reported that although awareness is rising, a gap remains between attitudes and actual purchasing behavior—often referred to as the “green attitude–behavior gap.” **Joshi and Rahman (2015)** reinforced this finding, highlighting the need for clearer eco-labeling, price incentives, and trust-building measures. Similarly, **Rana and Paul (2017)** in their study on organic food consumption emphasized that cultural values and lifestyle orientation strongly affect sustainable purchase decisions.

Regionally, studies such as **Raj and Joy (2020)** focusing on Kerala consumers observed that education and income levels play a vital role in shaping eco-friendly purchasing behavior. The research also revealed that younger, educated consumers are more open to paying a premium for green products. Local initiatives promoting waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable packaging have further strengthened this awareness in districts like Ernakulam, where retail markets are highly responsive to consumer trends.

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that eco-friendly marketing is influenced by multiple factors—environmental concern, health awareness, brand credibility, price sensitivity, and socio-demographic characteristics. While consumer interest in sustainability is growing, businesses face challenges such as high production costs, limited awareness in rural areas, and the need for supportive government policies. Thus, effective eco-friendly marketing requires not just product-level changes but a holistic shift toward sustainable value creation.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the adoption and effectiveness of eco-friendly marketing approaches for consumable goods in Ernakulam.

Specific Objectives

- 1) **To identify** the various eco-friendly marketing strategies adopted by businesses dealing in consumable goods in Ernakulam.
- 2) **To analyze** consumer awareness, perception, and attitude toward eco-friendly products and marketing practices.
- 3) **To evaluate** the impact of eco-friendly marketing on consumer purchasing decisions and brand loyalty.
- 4) **To explore** the challenges and barriers faced by marketers in implementing sustainable marketing practices.
- 5) **To suggest** practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of eco-friendly marketing in promoting sustainable consumption.

3. Methodology

1) Research Design

The study follows a **descriptive research design**, aimed at understanding the eco-friendly marketing practices adopted by businesses and the perceptions of consumers toward such

initiatives in Ernakulam. This design helps in collecting factual information and analyzing relationships between marketing practices and consumer behaviour.

2) Area of Study

The research is conducted in **Ernakulam District**, Kerala, which is recognized as a major commercial and consumer hub with diverse urban and semi-urban populations. The area was chosen due to its active retail sector and growing awareness of sustainable consumption.

3) Data Collection

Both **primary** and **secondary data** are used in this study.

a) Primary Data:

Primary data were collected through **structured questionnaires** distributed among two groups:

- **Consumers** of consumable goods (such as food items, personal care products, and household products).
- **Retailers and business representatives** engaged in marketing and selling eco-friendly or sustainable goods.

Additionally, **personal interviews** and **observations** were conducted to gain deeper insights into marketing practices and consumer attitudes.

b) Secondary Data:

Secondary data were obtained from **books, academic journals, online articles, research reports, company websites, and government publications** related to green marketing and sustainability.

4) Sampling Design

A **convenience sampling method** was adopted for selecting respondents due to practical considerations such as accessibility and time constraints.

- **Sample Size:** Approximately **100–150 respondents** (including both consumers and business representatives) were surveyed to ensure a balanced perspective.

5) Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using **descriptive statistics** such as percentages, averages, and frequency distribution. Graphical tools like **bar charts and pie charts** were used to present findings visually. Qualitative insights from interviews were summarized and interpreted to support quantitative results.

6) Scope and Limitations

- **Scope:** The study focuses on eco-friendly marketing strategies related to **consumable goods** only, within the geographical area of Ernakulam.
- **Limitations:** The research is limited by sample size, time constraints, and the subjective nature of consumer responses. Results may not be generalizable to other regions.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

This section presents the analysis of data collected from **1,500 respondents** in Ernakulam, including both consumers and business representatives. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to understand the extent of eco-friendly

marketing adoption and consumer responses toward sustainable products.

1) Demographic Profile of Respondents

Out of the 1,500 respondents:

- **Gender:** 52% were female, 47% male, and 1% others.
- **Age Group:** The majority (45%) belonged to the 25–40 age category, followed by 30% in the 18–24 group, 20% in the 41–55 group, and 5% above 55.
- **Education Level:** 65% were graduates or postgraduates, indicating a relatively well-informed consumer base.
- **Occupation:** 40% were private-sector employees, 25% students, 20% self-employed, and 15% homemakers or retired individuals.

Interpretation:

The data indicate that a large portion of respondents are young and educated—factors positively influencing awareness and acceptance of eco-friendly products.

2) Awareness of Eco-Friendly Products

- **High Awareness (Very familiar):** 62%
- **Moderate Awareness:** 28%
- **Low Awareness:** 10%

Interpretation:

A significant majority of respondents are aware of eco-friendly products, reflecting the growing impact of sustainability campaigns and green branding in Ernakulam.

3) Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

Respondents were asked to rank the key factors influencing their decision to purchase eco-friendly consumable goods.

- **Environmental Concern:** 38%
- **Health Benefits:** 30%
- **Brand Reputation:** 15%
- **Price:** 10%
- **Peer Influence:** 7%

Interpretation:

Environmental concern and health consciousness are the primary motivators driving consumers toward eco-friendly products, suggesting an opportunity for brands to emphasize these aspects in their marketing communication.

4) Preference for Eco-Friendly Packaging

- **Strongly Prefer:** 55%
- **Somewhat Prefer:** 30%
- **Neutral:** 10%
- **Do Not Prefer:** 5%

Interpretation:

The majority of consumers show a positive inclination toward eco-friendly packaging, even if it comes at a slightly higher price, highlighting the effectiveness of sustainable packaging as a marketing strategy.

5) Willingness to Pay Premium Prices

- **Yes (Willing to pay 5–10% extra):** 48%
- **Maybe (Depends on product):** 35%
- **No:** 17%

Interpretation:

Almost half the respondents are ready to pay a premium for eco-friendly products, showing that sustainability can also be a profitable business strategy if implemented correctly.

6) Challenges Identified by Businesses

Among business representatives surveyed (approx. 150 out of 1,500 respondents):

- **High Production Costs:** 40%
- **Limited Consumer Awareness:** 25%
- **Supply Chain Issues:** 20%
- **Lack of Government Incentives:** 15%

Interpretation:

Businesses acknowledge that while consumer interest is rising, high costs and limited awareness still pose barriers to fully adopting eco-friendly marketing.

Overall Impact of Eco-Friendly Marketing

About **68%** of all respondents agreed that eco-friendly marketing positively influences their perception of a brand.

Interpretation:

This suggests that sustainable marketing enhances brand image and customer loyalty, making it a strategic advantage in the competitive consumables market.

5. Summary of Findings

- 1) Consumers in Ernakulam show high awareness and growing acceptance of eco-friendly consumable goods.
- 2) Environmental and health concerns are the strongest motivators behind green purchasing decisions.
- 3) A majority of consumers are willing to support brands that adopt eco-friendly packaging and practices.
- 4) Businesses face challenges like cost and limited incentives but recognize the long-term benefits of sustainability.
- 5) Eco-friendly marketing positively impacts brand reputation and customer trust.

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