

# A Study on Consumers' Perception towards Eco-Friendly Products in Kathmandu Valley

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## Abstract

This study examines a study on consumers' perception towards eco-friendly products in Kathmandu valley. Consumer perception is selected as the dependent variable. Similarly, product price, product quality, environmental awareness, labeling and packaging are selected as the independent variables. This study is based on primary data with 131 observations. The correlation coefficients and regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of different factors influencing the consumers' perception towards eco-friendly products in Kathmandu valley.

The study showed that product quality has a positive impact on consumer perception. It means that better product quality better will be the consumer perception. Similarly, product price has a positive impact on consumer perception. It indicates that increase in product price leads to increase in consumer perception. It shows that higher the price better will be the consumer perception. Moreover, environmental awareness has a positive impact on consumer perception. It means that higher the environmental awareness better will be the consumer perception. Likewise, labeling has a positive impact on consumer perception. It shows that better the labeling of the product better will be the consumer perception. Further, packaging has a positive impact on consumer perception. It shows that better the packaging of eco-friendly product better will be the consumer perception.

*Keywords:* product price, product quality, environmental awareness, labeling, packaging, consumer perception.

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## 1. Introduction

Eco-friendly products are those that are manufactured using environmentally sustainable practices and materials and that have minimal negative impact on the environment (Bhardwaj *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, green marketing or environmental marketing refers to ecological products such as healthy food, phosphate free, recyclable, refillable ozone friendly, and environment friendly. Consumers are ready to pay more prices for those products which are causing less environmental pollution (Geetha & Jenifer, 2014). Further, Consumer defined eco-friendly package for food products should be visually appealing while satisfying consumers' environmental expectations relating to packaging materials and manufacturing process (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, the eco-friendly consumption behavior is

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the consumption behavior that consumers strive to protect the ecological environment and minimize the negative impact of consumption on the environment during the purchase, use and post-treatment of products. Specifically, it includes the purchase of energy-saving products, the purchase of organic products, and the purchase of biodegradable or pollution-free products (Chen *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, green image refers to a consumer's overall perceptions/ideas of a green product/service and its features whereas environmental knowledge refers to a consumer's ability to know/understand the environmental concepts, issues, problems, and model his/her activities (Han, 2021). Further, green or eco-friendly marketing refers to organizational efforts to develop, package, and promote products and services in a manner that attempts to minimize harmful effects to the physical environment (Gingerich, 2015).

Natakoesoemah & Adiarsi (2020) analyzed the correlation between environmental knowledge and perceived consumer effectiveness in eco-friendly product buying by the millennial consumers and found that there is a significant relationship between environmental knowledge and perceived consumer effectiveness in eco-friendly product buying behavior. Further, Cheah & Phau (2011) identified the key antecedents and moderators that influence consumers' willingness to purchase eco-friendly products. The study showed the three antecedents of eco-literacy, interpersonal influence & value orientation have strong correlation with attitude towards eco-friendly products. Similarly, Shaikh & Mustaghis (2011) investigated consumer's attitude towards green products, consumer's awareness of environment, their attitude towards environment protection, & their perceived functionality of eco-labels. The study found that there is a no correlation between consumer's attitude to protect environment & acceptance of environmentally friendly products. Moreover, Nath *et al.* (2013) examined the impact of basic enablers such as literacy rate, green promotion tools, incentives, attitudes on the adaptation of green products. The study showed that the knowledge of environment issue and environmentally responsible behavior are positively related.

Kim and Lee (2023) showed that ease of purchase and eco label credibility has moderating effects on the relationship between purchase intention and purchase behavior. Further, Amendah and Park (2008) found that environmental involvement and uniqueness seeking have a positive relationship with willingness to pay more. Moreover, Pudaruth *et al.* (2015) found that the purchasing patterns for eco-friendly cosmetics and beauty care products were influenced by a combination of eight factors

namely: women lifestyles, self-image health and economic considerations, ethical consumerism among females, pharmacological essence of green cosmetics and beauty care products, visual appeal and physical cues in cosmetic stores, price-conscious decisions and effective promotion, belief on ethical claims in green messages, brand image and usage experience” and “sales representatives and social influences. Similarly, Goyal and Bansal (2018) examined the intention and perception of consumers in buying of the eco-food products. The study found that consumers believe Eco-natural food to be healthier, tastier and better as compared to non-eco traditionally cultivated food.

Royne *et al.* (2011) examined the factors affecting an individual's willingness to pay more for an environmentally friendly product. The study found that willingness to pay more differs across demographic groups. The study also found that individuals who rate concern for waste as highly important are willing to spend more money on an eco-friendly product. Similarly, Tudu and Mishra (2021) found that the price of green products weakens the positive relationship between environmental concern, environmental knowledge and Indian consumers' intention to buy green products. Further, Alex and Mathew (2018) found that green marketing awareness, product innovation and quality has a positive influence on perceived price and purchase intention of eco-friendly products. Similarly, Ismail *et al.* (2018) revealed that environmental awareness has a significant impact in affecting consumer purchasing behavior while both green branding and eco labeling do not impact consumer's purchasing behavior in significant extents. Moreover, Borin *et al.* (2011) showed that consumer perception of product quality, value, and purchase intentions does not differ significantly between products with positive environmental messages and those without any message. Further, Gulecha and Elangovan (2017) showed that variables like perceived trust and perceived value of eco-friendly products have positive effect on the eco-friendly product purchase behaviour while perceived risk has negative effect on purchase intention.

Agyeman (2014) examined the factors that affect consumers buying behaviors for green products. The study found that there is a significant relationship between price, environmental concerns, quality, brand name, convenience, packaging which affects consumers buying behavior for green products. Further, Barge *et al.* (2014) examined the attitude of consumers towards pricing of eco-friendly products. The study showed that the consumers were not ready to purchase those products which were costlier but causing less environmental pollution. Similarly, Pillai (2016) examined the perception of

consumers towards eco-friendly white goods awareness about the availability of eco- friendly products and the demographic profile of green consumers. The study found that consumers were aware about availability of eco-friendly product but awareness needs to be created properly about benefits, label used and availability of such products to increase its consumption. Moreover, Mokha (2017) analyzed the usage of eco-friendly products among customers with different age groups and educational qualifications. The study showed that there is a significant relationship between educational qualification and age group and the usage of eco-friendly products. Further, Ihemezie *et al.* (2018) investigated the actual effect of green products labels in influencing consumers towards eco-friendly behavior. The study showed the positive impact of green products label standards on consumer behavior. Similarly, Jaiswal & Kant (2018) examined the relationship of cognitive factors influencing on green purchase intension directly and indirectly via the mediating role of attitude towards green products. The study revealed that the attitude towards green products is positively and significantly related to green purchase intension.

In the context of Nepal, the market for eco-friendly products is yet to become a mainstream. Eco labels, product experience and willingness to pay more acted as potential background factors for young consumers attitude, knowledge and awareness formation (Ghimire, 2020). Similarly, Aryal *et al.* (2009) examined the consumers' willingness to pay a price premium for organic products in Kathmandu Valley. The study revealed that all respondents were willing to pay price premium, but the level of acceptability varied considerably. Further, Khanal (2022) found that the Nepalese people have negative perception towards single use plastics and are in search of alternatives. Similarly, Thagunna and Khanal (2013) analyzed the factors that affect the purchasing behavior of Nepalese women. The study showed that price, brand awareness, accurate information and age etc. affect the purchasing behavior of the women in Nepal. Further, Shrestha (2021) investigated the factors that affect the consumers buying behavior towards the organic foods in Nepalese market. The study concluded that health-conscious, environment conscious, price, taste awareness are the factors affecting consumers buying behavior towards organic foods. Similarly, Lamichhane (2022) explored the consumers' awareness and perception towards eco-friendly products in Pokhara Valley. The study showed that consumers' perception towards green products is negatively concern with the price of green products and positively concerned with the quality, availability and promotion strategy.

The above discussion shows that empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on consumer perception towards eco-friendly products.

Though there are above mentioned empirical evidences in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The main purpose of the study is to analyze the consumer's perception towards eco-friendly products in Kathmandu valley. Specifically, it examines the impact product price, product quality, environmental awareness, labeling and packaging on consumer perception in Kathmandu valley.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. Section two describes the sample, data and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and the final section draws the conclusion.

## 2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data. The data were gathered from 131 respondents through questionnaire. The respondents' views were collected on product price, product quality, environmental awareness, labeling and packaging and consumer perception. The study used descriptive and casual comparative research design.

### *The model*

The model estimated in this study assumes that the consumption of eco-friendly product depends on consumer perception. The dependent variables selected for the study is consumer perception. Similarly, the selected independent variables are product price, product quality, environmental awareness, labeling and packaging. Therefore, the model takes the following form:

$$CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PQ + \beta_2 PP + \beta_3 EA + \beta_4 L + \beta_5 P +$$

Where,

CP = Consumer perception

PP = Product price

PQ = Product quality

L = Labeling

EA = Environmental awareness

P = Packaging

Product quality was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where

respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I prefer to buy eco-friendly products based on quality over price.”, “Eco-friendly products are better in quality than conventional products.” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.803$ ).

Product price was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I believe that the price of the eco-friendly product is fair.”, “Price of eco-friendly product is not affordable.” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.749$ ).

Environmental awareness was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I believe that environmental awareness increases the consumption of eco-friendly products.”, “I am aware about the benefits of eco-friendly products for the environment.” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.814$ ).

Labeling was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I prefer to buy eco-friendly product even if it is expensive because of the existence of environmental information on labels.”, “I am satisfied with the label of the eco-friendly product.” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.770$ ).

Packaging was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I prefer to buy products that use eco-friendly packaging.”, “I believe that the use of eco-friendly packaging helps to protect the eco-system.” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.786$ ).

Consumer perception was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I prefer to buy products that are less harmful for the environment.”, “I believe that eco-friendly products are less expensive than normal products.” and so on.

The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = 0.802$ ).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with hypothesis formulation.

### *Product price*

Price is the major perceived barrier to purchase (Aschemann-Witzel and Zielke, 2017). According to Kukar-Kinney *et al.* (2007), consumers' perceptions of the fairness of a store's pricing policy influence their price fairness perceptions, consequently influencing their retail shopping intentions. The respondents (consumers) were ready to pay a premium price for eco-friendly products and were satisfied with eco-friendly products that they purchased (Setia *et al.*, 2021). According to Silva *et al.* (2012), price plays the most significant role on consumer decision making process followed by food safety. Environmental involvement and uniqueness seeking have a positive relationship with willingness to pay more for the product (Amendah and Park, 2008). Based on it, this study develops following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between product price and consumer perception.

### *Product quality*

Consumers make their purchase decisions based on the signal (perception) of quality they experience (Lyer and Kuksov, 2010). According to Ibrahim *et al.* (2015), there is a positive relationship between the product perceived quality and consumer satisfaction. Chikosha *et al.* (2021) determined the impact of product quality on purchase intention of green products. The study found that green purchase intention is significantly and positively influenced by product quality. Product quality is a critical determinant of consumer satisfaction. The demand for a product depends upon the quality that a manufacturer is providing to their consumers (Khan and Ahmed, 2012). Based on it, this study develops following hypothesis:

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between product quality and consumer perception.

### *Environmental awareness*

Environmental protections and sustainable development were made for those products which are good for health and safe for environment to solve the environmental problems (Rukmani, 2020). According to Zsoka *et al.* (2012), there is a strong correlation between the environmental awareness



and consumers buying behavior. According to Shaikh and Rahman (2011), there is a significant positive correlation between consumer awareness of environmental issues and their attitude on green products. The purchasing of the green products has been increasing due to the rising of customer's awareness of the environmental issues (Ariffin *et al.*, 2019). Gautam (2020) revealed that greater the environmental knowledge of environmental friendly products, the more positive attitude towards environmental friendly products was perceived. The study also found that attitude didn't have significant mediating effect in the relationship between environmental knowledge and purchase intentions. Based on it, this study develops following hypothesis:

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive relationship between environmental awareness and consumer perception.

### *Labeling*

Eco-label is characterized as a tool for consumers to assist the progress of making a decision to choose eco-friendly product which also allows them to understand how the process of products are made (Reddy and AnjaliSravani, 2019). According to D'souza *et al.* (2006), there are consumers who will buy green products even if they are lower in quality in comparison to alternative products, but would look for environmental information on labels. The eco-labeling is used to make consumer know about certain characteristics of the products or certain aspects that preserve the environmental that could build trust from the consumer towards the products regarding the environmentally safe guarantee that the product claimed to be (Ariffin *et al.*, 2019). Based on it, this study develops following hypothesis:

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a positive relationship between product labeling and consumer perception.

### *Packaging*

Packaging shows all of the information about any product like where they are made, what are ingredient, who are the manufacturer, when was made, what are their weight, types, how to use the product etc. Packaging is the container for a product – encompassing the physical appearance of the container and including the design, color, shape, labeling and materials used (Deliya, 2012). Consumer knowledge and levels of awareness, interest, and appreciation of these functions of packaging are major factors in their refusal or acceptance of emerging packaging technologies (Brennan *et al.*, 2020). According to Hussain *et al.* (2015), the packaging is important element for the consumer buying behavior and communication information



about the product. According to Herbes *et al.* (2018), growing awareness of the environmental damage associated with conventional product packaging has led to keen interest in green packaging. Based on it, this study develops following hypothesis:

H<sub>5</sub>: There is a positive relationship between packaging and consumer perception.

3. Results and discussion

*Correlation analysis*

On analysis of data, correlation analysis has been undertaken first and for this purpose, Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients along with means and standard deviations have been computed, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

**Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients matrix**

This table presents Kendall’s Tau coefficients between dependent and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 131 observations. The dependent variable is CP (Consumer perception towards eco-friendly product). The independent variables are PQ (product quality), PP (product price), EA (environmental awareness), L (labeling) and P (packaging).

Variables	Mean	S.D.	CP	PQ	PP	EA	L	P
CP	3.884	0.644	1					
PQ	3.839	0.713	0.439**	1				
PP	3.656	0.724	0.388**	0.385**	1			
EA	3.972	0.704	0.382**	0.484**	0.290**	1		
L	3.726	0.716	0.505**	0.435**	0.532**	0.323**	1	
P	3.957	0.667	0.459**	0.455**	0.341**	0.556**	0.423**	1

Note: The asterisk signs (\*\*) and (\*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent levels respectively.

Table 1 shows the Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients of dependent and independent variables for customer relations. The study show that product quality has a positive relationship with the consumer perception. It means that increase in product quality increases the consumer perception. Product price has a positive relationship with the consumer perception. It means that increase in product price increases the consumer perception. Environmental awareness has a positive relationship with the consumer perception. It means that increase in environmental awareness better will be the consumer perception

towards eco-friendly products. Labeling has a positive relationship with the consumer perception. It means that better the labeling of the product better will be the consumer perception. Packaging has a positive relationship with the consumer perception. It means that better the packaging of eco-friendly product better will be the consumer perception.

### *Regression analysis*

Having indicated the Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it presents the regression results of product price, product quality, environmental awareness, labeling and packaging on consumer perception towards eco-friendly products in Kathmandu valley.

Table 2

### **Estimated regression results of product price, product quality, environmental awareness, labeling and packaging on consumer perception in Kathmandu valley**

The results are based on 131 observations using linear regression model. The model is  $CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PQ + \beta_2 PP + \beta_3 EA + \beta_4 L + \beta_5 P +$  where the dependent variable is consumer perception (CP). The independent variables are product quality (PQ), product price (PP), environmental awareness (EA), labeling (L) and packaging (P).

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of					Adj. R <sub>bar</sub> <sup>2</sup>	SEE	F-value
		PQ	PP	EA	L	P			
1	2.107 (7.886) **	0.463 (6.767) **					0.256	0.556	45.78
2	2.296 (8.998) **		0.434 (6.346) **				0.232	0.565	40.27
3	2.034 (7.261) **			0.466 (6.707) **			0.253	0.557	44.98
4	1.842 (7.720) **				0.548 (8.713) **		0.366	0.513	75.92
5	1.909 (6.536) **					0.499 (6.859) **	0.262	0.554	47.04
6	1.584 (5.536) **	0.329 (4.488)	0.284 (3.933) **				0.331	0.527	33.19
7	1.204 (4.364) **			0.272 (4.028) **	0.429 (6.470) **		0.433	0.485	50.55
8	1.311 (4.677) **				0.419 (5.808) **	0.256 (3.308) **	0.411	0.494	46.35
9	1.102 (3.876) **		0.107 (1.388)	0.258 (3.796) **	0.367 (4.574) **		0.437	0.484	34.58
10	1.087 (3.782) **			0.210 (2.616) *	0.393 (5.512) **	0.126 (1.393)	0.437	0.484	34.59
11	1.010 (3.441) **		0.095 (1.220)	0.205 (2.553) *	0.341 (4.129) **	0.112 (1.226)	0.439	0.483	26.41

Notes:

- i. Figures in parenthesis are t-values.
- ii. The asterisk signs (\*\*) and (\*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent level respectively.
- iii. Consumer buying behavior is dependent variable.

Table 2 shows that the beta coefficient for product quality is positive with the consumer perception. It indicates that product quality has positive impact on the consumer perception. This finding is consistent with the findings of Lyer and Kuksov (2010). Likewise, the beta coefficient for product price is positive with the consumer perception. It indicates that product price has positive impact on consumer perception. This finding is consistent with the findings of Biswas and Roy (2014). In addition, the beta coefficient for environmental awareness is positive with the consumer perception. It indicates that environmental awareness has a positive impact on the consumer perception. This result is consistent with the findings of Borin *et al.*, (2011). Further, the beta coefficient of labeling is positively related with the consumer perception. It indicates that labeling has a positive impact on the consumer perception. The finding is consistent with the findings of Kulshreshtha *et al.* (2019). Moreover, the beta coefficient for packaging is positive with the consumer perception which indicates that packaging has positive impact on consumer perception. This finding is consistent with the finding of Hussain *et al.*, (2015).

#### **4. Summary and conclusion**

Eco-friendly products are those that are manufactured using environmentally sustainable practices and materials and that have minimal negative impact on the environment. Consumers are ready to pay more prices for those products which are causing less environmental pollution. With the increase of consumers' awareness of eco-friendly products, more and more people express their willingness to choose eco-friendly products.

This study attempts to examine the consumer perception towards eco-friendly products in Kathmandu valley. The study is based on primary data with 131 observations.

The study also showed that product price, product quality, environmental awareness, labeling and packaging has a positive relationship with consumer perception. The study concluded that proper product price, product quality, environmental awareness, labeling and packaging have a significant role in increasing consumer perception towards eco-friendly products. The study also concluded that the most influencing factor is product labeling followed by product packaging and quality that explains the consumer perception towards eco-friendly product.

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