PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS ECO-FRIENDLY ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS WHILE INCORPORATING MEDIATING INFLUENCE OF BRAND IMAGE

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Abstract: Consumer demand for electronic products has augmented leading to detrimental impact on environment due to e-waste and emission of green house gases and also the consumers are actively involved in environment protection drives, yet the conversion to final purchase is not found to be reciprocal. The study attempts explores the relationship between factors -Environmental concern, Social influence, Perceived value, Availability, Government initiative, Brand Image and Purchase Intention. 15 hypotheses were proposed and tested through Mediation Analysis. Convenience sampling method was used to collect data from 284 respondents from two metro cities of India. Green purchase intention is found to be significantly influenced by Environmental concern, Social Influence, Perceived Value and Availability, whereas Government Initiative does not influence green purchase intention. Brand Image fully mediates the relationship between Perceived value, Availability and Green purchase intention, while partially mediates the relationship between Environmental concern, Social influence and Green purchase intention.

Key words: Green Marketing, Brand Image, Green Purchase Intention, Environmental concern.

1. INTRODUCTION

Environment on earth is constantly changing. Global Warming has brought about major influx in natural disasters and climatic changes. There is an alarming increasing in air and water pollution which poses major threat to our environment. The environmental degradation is also triggered by negative impact of production and consumption of different products and services. There is an urgent need for directing the attention of manufacturers and consumers towards environment friendly products which are considered "green" like energy-efficient electrical appliances, paints free from lead, phosphate free detergents, natural foods, ecofriendly paper etc.

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Companies are focusing on green marketing and are producing eco-friendly or green products that have less harmful effects on the environment. Today's consumers are actively involved into environment protection drive; they are trying to lower their carbon footprint on the environment by purchasing green products and adopting greener lifestyle. While the shift to "green" seems to be expensive to many consumers, low awareness and consciousness about green products and the environment; and the unclear value perceptions of consumers from green products, the organizations face a challenge to address the mandatory requirements of the governments to manufacture and offer environmental friendly products in a profitable manner. With such discerning consumers to be satisfied whose needs and brand loyalties are constantly getting redefined. It is desirous that organizations appropriately upgrade and integrate product development processes which are following green technologies and incorporate green strategies into their operational and marketing activities in order to gain a competitive advantage in overly saturated market.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Consumer demand for electronic products across various product categories has increased manifold. According to Ernst & Young, the Indian domestic demand for electronics product is expected to reach US\$20 billion market by 2020 from US\$10 billion in 2014 and expected to grow at a rate of (CAGR) of 24.4% during 2012-2020. It has lead to new product launches much frequently than ever before. Variety seeking behavior of consumers and regular technology up gradations has lead to shorter product life cycles and an urge to replace old ones frequently.

The phenomenon has shown a detrimental impact on environment where large amount of e-waste is generated alongside the green house gases emitted from electronic appliances like Refrigerators, Air Conditioners, Televisions, Laptops etc. Indian electronics product companies are also acknowledging the significance of Green Products and adopting variety of initiatives to make their products environment friendly.

A range of research on green marketing is undertaken in different contexts addressing theoretical and empirical issues; the review suggests that academic research on factors influencing purchase intention towards green electronic products is sparse in Indian context. The present study attempts to identify factors which influence purchase of green electronic products and the mediating role of Brand Image on purchase intention.

The findings may offer an insight into the consumers' purchase decision making process; and give a direction to formulate suitable green marketing strategy for electronic product companies.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing fills the gap between an organization, its markets and societal needs. Satisfying the needs of ever discerning consumers profitably is the core of any marketing ideology. Organizations are facing immense pressure from governments and consumers for eco-friendly products. In order to appeal to the consumers and abide by rules organizations have adopted measures to reduce environment pollution and improve their marketing actions.

Green marketing is a process of consciously developing and selling products or services which have zero or negligible impact on environment while highlighting environmental and ecological benefits to the conscious consumers. Green Marketing is defined as marketing of environmentally safe products by American Marketing Association. According to Peattie (1995) green marketing is an integrated management process which incorporates anticipating, recognizing and satisfying the needs of consumers and society in a sustainable and profitable way.

Mintu and Lozada (1993) defined green marketing as incorporating marketing tools to facilitate exchange and satisfy the goals of the organization and its consumers. In the process an organization also acknowledges the significance of preservation, protection and conservation of the physical environment. Polonsky, (1994) defined green marketing as activities intended to support exchange of goods and services developed to satisfy consumer needs while causing least detrimental impact on environment. An array of activities is covered under the purview of green marketing. These include transformed production process, modified product, packaging, as well as advertising and eliminating any activity which affects the environment negatively.

3.1. Purchase Intention

Decision made by consumers in different purchase and related situations under the influence of different stimuli is called as purchase intention. A consumer exhibits his purchase while evaluating a product in the backdrop of his socio-cultural influence, attitude, perception and motivation. Purchase intention can be a useful tool for any organization to predict purchasing process (Ghosh, 1990). After deciding to purchase certain product, they will be driven by their purchase intention. Purchase intentions are influenced by consumers' perception towards price and quality continuum and the value derived (Zeithmal, 1988 and Grewal et.al 1998). According to Nik, R. and Nik, A.R. (2009) purchase intention is a measure of consumers' relative strength of motive for adopting particular type of buying behaviour. Consumers demonstrate different decision making styles which act as a point of reference at the time of evaluation of different products or services (Sproles and Kendall, 1986).

Considering the facts, green purchase intention can be comprehended as consumers' readiness to accept and evaluate electronic products on the value dimensions of not only price and quality but also their impact on environment. Purchase intention of green electronic products may be driven by safety and health consciousness, social influence, environmental concern and value perception and government initiatives.

3.2. Environmental Concern

It is considered as an independent variable for the purpose of this study. Environmental concern has grown manifold and surpassed the yester year levels (Dunlap, R.E. & R. Scarce (1991). According to (Saeed R. et al., 2013) environmental concern is the level of awareness and consciousness people have towards environment protection and their involvement in personally contributing to environment protection. Evaluation and purchase decision of green electronic products are driven by the knowledge and concern of consumers about environment and its significance in one's life (Hassan, Y. & Nor, M., 2013). However, (Quader, I.K.A. & Zainuddin, Y. 2010) opine that there appears to be inconsistency between environmental concern and environmental behavior of consumers. Less congruency is seen in purchase decision making of consumers who have expressed high concern and attitude towards environmental issues. This kind of inconsistency in consumer behavior adds to the complexity in formulating green marketing strategy.

3.3. Social Influence

An individual's behavior, feelings, attitude and perceptions are significantly influenced by his or her interaction with one's social settings and reference group (Rashotte, 2007). Ohman (2011) found that consumers' green purchase intention is significantly influenced by social influence. Many researchers like Eze *et al.* (2013), Liu *et al.* (2012) and Welsch *et al.*, (2009) in their research found a positive relation between social influence and purchase intention. There are different types of social influences like primary reference groups comprising of family and friends (Klobas and Clyde, 2001); and secondary reference group including colleagues, salespersons and sometimes even strangers (Maram and Kongsompong, 2007). Understanding the influence of these groups may help an organization to convert purchase intention into actual purchase.

3.4. Perceived Value

Consumers evaluate a product on the dimensions of costs – monetary, energy, time, effort and psyche and the derived emotional and functional benefits. A product or service is said to be of value if the perceived benefits are higher than the cost that one pays. Perceived value for consumer is a right combination of

expected quality at the willing price. Purchase motive is an important reference point for a consumer while judging the value of a (Delfrooz N. & Goli A., 2015). Ng *et al.*, (2013) stated that, perceived value from a green product is an overall evaluation of what is expected and what is offered in terms of environment protection, protection from health hazards or energy saving etc. alongside functional and sustainable characteristics of the product (Joshi Y. & Rahman Z. (2015).

3.5. Availability

Sale of any product is directly related to its availability and the ease with which consumers are able to locate and purchase it. Availability significantly influences the purchase decision and the probability of conversion of purchase intention into actual purchase (Kumar, 2012 and Beardworth, Brynam, Leil, Goode, Haslam & Haslam, 2002). Non-availability at the point of sales is found to be a crucial constraining factor in converting intention into actual green purchases (Bonini & Oppenheim, 2008). It is evident from previous empirical studies that availability of green products positively influences the intention to purchase green products (Rajput, Kaura & Khanna, 2014), while Rasheed, Farhan, Zahid, Javed & Rizan (2014) found in their study that there is no significant influence of availability on purchase intention.

3.6. Government Initiative

Governments across the globe take initiatives to support global and national causes (Diekmeyer, 2008) by making policies and developing programs to influence positive changes in behavior and attitude of citizens. Governments formulate and implement environment sustainability programs to create awareness by opting for social marketing mix. In this connection, Government of India has revealed assorted strategies for implementing a sustainable consumption and development pattern. Government of India involves nearly all ministries in taking decisions for sustainable improvement and sheltering of the environment. The Indian Government has prepared different legislations, regulations and policies to concentrate on the issues related to cooperation among sub-regional, regional and International level for Sustainable Development. There are legislative regulations and guidelines framed like Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, Prevention and Control of Pollution (Uniform Consent Procedure) Rules, 1999 and Ozone Depleting Substances (Regulation) Rules, 2000 etc. Similarly there are some of the Policy initiatives taken by the Ministry of Environment and Forests for sustainable development which includes National Environmental Action Plan for the Control of Pollution, to prevent environmental degradation Development of Management Tools are there, and Rules on the management of Lead acid Batteries etc. (Economic Aspects of Sustainable Development in India, http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/ natlinfo/countr/india/eco.html)

Government of India launched National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC) in the mid of 1986 with an objective to build environmental awareness among people at the national level. For this campaign, nominal financial assistance from all over the country was provided to the NGOs, schools, colleges, universities, research institutes, army units, women and youth organizations, government departments etc. for conducting action oriented activities and raising awareness (Minstry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, http://www.moef.nic.in/division/national-environmental-awareness-campaign-neac). Government has also made National Manufacturing Policy-2010 in order to make sustainable growth of manufacturing sector, ensure environmental sustainability through green technologies, manage energy efficiently, and utilizing the natural resources optimally and restoring the damaged / degraded eco-systems. (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, http://dipp.nic.in/english/policies/national_manufacturing_policy_25october2011.pdf)

Government policies like incentives for green product manufacturing, promotes environment sustainability in the country and also helps the marketers in promoting their green products. Pavan (2010) argued that the government can significantly influence public awareness and opinion about eco-friendly products by developing campaigns related to adopting green lifestyles (Nabsiah Abdul Wahid, Elham, et al. 2011). Researchers have accorded the inclusion of government role as a predictor of green purchase intention (Punitha & Rahman (2011) and Tsen, et al. (2006).

3.7. Brand Image

Brand image is conceptualized as the perceived personality a brand acquires over a long run. Relative strength and weakness of a brand are evaluated on the basis of perceived image it attains. Perceived risks like financial, social, physical risks are considerably reduced in brands with positive brand image (Akaah & Korgaonkar, 1988; Rao & Monroe, 1987). According to Keller (1993, 1998) brand image comprises of a share in the memory of a consumer and certain associations. Brand image is an outcome of integrated marketing communication, holistic consumer experience and promotions instead of being reflected product features or attributes. Consumers use brand image as an extrinsic stimulus while making a purchase decision (Zeithaml, 1988, Richardson, Dick and Jain, 1994).

According to Chen (2010) green brand image comprises of perception, attitude, associations, and dissonance towards a brand in consumers' mind towards ecofriendly concerns. According to Doszhanov & Ahmad (2015), Overall brand image includes green brand image as a sub-set. The existing value perception of a brand shall get transferred to green products offered by any organization.

4. Hypotheses Development

The present study is undertaken to identify factors which influence purchase intention of consumers while evaluating green electronic products. As the literature suggests that brand image acts as a crucial cue during purchase decision making process thus an attempt is also made to find the mediating role of Brand Image on the purchase intention of electronic products. The study explores the relationship between predictor variable- purchase intention, criterion variables – Environmental Concern, Social Influence and Perceived Value and mediating variable- brand image. On the basis of the relationship among these variables following hypotheses have been formulated:

- H1- Environmental Concern has a significant positive influence on the Purchase Intention.
- H2- Social Influence has a significant positive influence on the Purchase Intention.
- H3- Perceived Value has a significant positive influence on the Purchase Intention.
- H4- Availability has a significant positive influence on the Purchase Intention.
- H5 Government Initiative has a significant positive influence on the Purchase Intention
- H6- Environmental Concern has a significant positive influence on the Brand Image.
- H 7- Social Influence has a significant positive influence on the Brand Image.
- H8- Perceived Value has a significant positive influence on the Brand Image.
- H9 Availability has a significant positive influence on the Brand Image
- H10- Government Initiative has a significant positive influence on the Brand Image

Mediating role of Brand Image between the Independent Variables and Dependent Variable

- H11- Brand Image mediates the influence of Environmental concern on Purchase intention
- H12 Brand Image mediates the influence of Social Influence on Purchase Intention
- H13- Brand Image mediates the influence of Perceived Value on Purchase Intention
- H14- Brand Image mediates the influence of Availability on Purchase Intention
- H15 Brand Image mediates the influence of Government Initiative on Purchase Intention

5. METHODOLOGY

The electronic products for the purpose of this research are defined as low power electronic and electrical products like refrigerators, washing machine, microwave, fans, heaters etc. Data was collected with the help of convenience sampling method from 284 respondents. The constructs used to measure independent, dependent and mediating variables were based on existing scales from previous studies on consumer behavior and purchase decision making of green products.

For data collection, a structured questionnaire was used. It was divided into two parts the demographic profile and direct and mediating influencers on purchase intention of green electronic products. A total of 23 items were used to measure Environmental Concern (5), Social Influence (6), Perceived Value (4), Brand Image (5) and Purchase Intention (3). All the items were measured on five point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly disagree. To evaluate the content validity expert opinion survey was done and Chronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess reliability which should be greater than 0.7 to be acceptable.

6. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Respondents Profile: A demographic profile of the studied sample of 284 respondents showed that 47.9% of the respondents were males and 52.1% were females. The respondents fell under the age groups of 18-25 years (20.7%), 26-35 years (44.5%), 36-45 years (15.9%), 45-55 years (14.2%) and above 55 years (4.7%). With respect to educational profile 3.6% were having an education only up to Higher Secondary, 40.4% respondents studied till graduation level, 50.6% respondents had taken their post graduate degrees, whereas, 5.4% respondents indicated that they held diploma in various streams. The respondents were earning monthly income in the range of upto 25000/- (12.4%), 25001/- 35000/ (31.3%), 35001/- 45000/ (30.3%), 45001/- 55000/ (18%) and above 55001/ (8%).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Sample and Cronbach Alpha value

| Cronbach's Alpha | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 0.776 | 3.7062 | 0.61025 |
| 0.73 | 3.0241 | 0.80255 |
| 0.73 | 3.4845 | 0.82429 |
| 0.689 | 3.7388 | 0.51421 |
| 0.816 | 3.8582 | 0.69401 |
| | 0.776 0.73 0.73 0.689 | 0.776 3.7062 0.73 3.0241 0.73 3.4845 0.689 3.7388 |

6.1. Regression analysis of Independent variables (Environmental concern, Social Influence, Perceived value, Availability and Government Initiative) **and Dependent variable (**Green Purchase intention**)**

The value of adjusted R²=0.603 indicates that the model explains 60.3% of variance. The beta values obtained for Environmental Concern (β = .534, p-value <0.01), Social influence (β = .479, p-value <0.01), Perceived Value 0.268, p-value <.05), Availability (β = .159, p-value <0.01) have significant impact on green purchase intention. The corresponding t values for the predictors Environmental concern, Social Influence, Perceived value, Availability are significant at (p<.05) as per the recommendations of (Field, 2009). Therefore on testing the hypotheses H_1 , H_2 , H_3 and H_4 are accepted, whereas Government Initiative has an insignificant influence on Green Purchase Intention rejecting hypothesis H_5

Table 2
Regression analysis of Environmental Concern, Social Influence, Perceived Value,
Availability and Government Initiative with Green Purchase Intention

| | R | R^2 | adj R² | Std. error | Sig. F | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|--------|-------------|--------|--|
| | Durbin Watson | = | | Estimate | | |
| | 0.785 1.605 | .617 | 0.603 | 0.62970368 | 0.000 | |
| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | | Std. Coeff. | | |
| | Beta | Std. error | Beta | T | Sig | |
| Environmental Concern | .533 | .052 | .534 | 10.307 | .000 | |
| Social Influence | .479 | .052 | .479 | 9.258 | .000 | |
| Perceived Value | .268 | .052 | .268 | 5.179 | .000 | |
| Availability | .159 | .052 | .159 | 3.075 | .000 | |
| Government Initiative | 042 | .052 | 042 | 807 | .000 | |

Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention

6.2. Regression analysis of Independent variables (Environmental Concern, Social Influence, Perceived Value, Availability, Government Initiative) **and Dependent variable** (Brand Image)

Table 3 shows that the model explains 88.5% variance of the total variance in Brand image (adj $R^2 = 0.885$, p-value <0.01). In addition, factors; Social influence ($\beta = 0.600$, p-value<0.01) Environmental concern ($\beta = 0.422$, p-value<0.05) Perceived

Table 3
Regression Analysis of Environmental Concern, Social Influence, Perceived Value,
Availability and Government Initiative with Brand Image

| | R Durbin Watson | R^2 | adj R² | Std. error Estimate | Sig. F | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------|------------------------|--------|--|
| | 0.943 1.826 | 0.617 | .885 | 0.33972941 | 0.000 | |
| | Unstan | dardized Coef | ficients | Std. coeff. | | |
| | Beta | Std. error | Beta | T | Sig | |
| Environmental | .422 | .028 | .422 | 15.172 | .000 | |
| Concern | | | | | | |
| Social Influence | .600 | .028 | .600 | 21.560 | .000 | |
| Perceived Value | .422 | .028 | .422 | 15.156 | .000 | |
| Availability | .171 | .028 | .171 | 6.135 | .000 | |
| Government Initiative | 378 | .028 | 378 | -13.588 | .000 | |

Dependent variable: Brand Image

value (β = 0.422, p-value <0.05) Availability (β = 0.171, p-value<0.05) and Government Initiative (β = -0.378, p-value<0.05) influence green purchase intention. Therefore hypotheses H_6 , H_7 , H_8 , H_9 , H_{10} are accepted though Government Initiative negatively influences Brand Image.

6.3. Regression analysis of Independent variables (Brand Image) **and Dependent variable (**Green Purchase Intention**)**

Results provided in Table 4 show a positive relationship between Brand Image and Green Purchase Intention. The value of R=0.460 indicates the degree of association between the Brand Image and Green purchase intention. The value of adjusted R²=0.205 indicates that the model explains 20.5% of variance. (adj R²=0.205, β =.460, p-value <0.01), indicating acceptance of hypothesis H₇.

Table 4
Regression Analysis of Brand Image and Green Purchase Intention

| _ | • | | _ | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------|-------|
| | R Durbin Watson | R ² | adj R² | Std. error Estimate | Sig. F | |
| | 0.460 Unstand | 0.211 ardized Co | 0.205 oefficients | 0.57502 Std. coeff. | 0.000 | 1.272 |
| | Beta | Std. er | ror | Beta | T | Sig |
| Brand Image | 0.611 | 0.121 | | 0.460 | 5.044 | 0.00 |

Dependent variable: Green Purchase Intention

6.4. Mediating effect of Brand Image on the Relationship between influencers of green product purchase and green purchase intention

To test the hypothesis postulated to evaluate the relationship between Brand Image and Green Purchase intention, hierarchical regression model was used. A series of prerequisites to conduct multiple regression analysis were carried out to test the relationship between Green Purchase Intention and environmental concern, social influence, perceived value while incorporating Brand image, following Baron and Kenny's (1986) model.

Results shown in **Table 5** indicate that H_{11} , Brand Image only partially mediates the relationship between the environmental concern and green purchase intention. The results show that Environmental Concern has a significant direct effect on Green Purchase Intention (β = 0.534, p-value <0.01) as well as a significant indirect effect (β = 0.390, p-value <0.01) through Brand Image. Similarly Brand Image also has shown a partial mediation between social influence and green purchase intention direct effect (β = .479, p-value <0.01) and indirect effect (β = .274, p-value <0.01), rejecting hypothesis H_{12} . On the other hand, Brand Image demonstrated full mediation between Perceived Value and Green Purchase Intention as stated

in H_{13} . The inclusion of Brand Image has resulted in insignificant Std. Bet coefficient (β = 0.123) in step 2. Similarly, Brand Image demonstrated full mediation between Availability and Green Purchase Intention as stated in H_{14} . The inclusion of Brand Image has resulted in insignificant Std. Bet coefficient (β = 0.101) in step 2. For Government Initiative beta coefficient is -0.042 in step 1 and on inclusion of mediation Brand Image it becomes 0.088 in step 2 and t-value of 1.139 (between 2 and + 2) suggests that Government Initiative is not a predictor of effective merchandise management, hence H_{15} is not supported.

Table 5
Summary of Mediator Regression Results: Effect of Brand Image on green purchase intention

| Dependent Variable | Independent variables | Std. beta Step 1 | Std. beta Step 2 |
|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Purchase intention | Environmental Concern | .534 | .390 |
| T direction investment | Social Influence | .479 | .274 |
| | Perceived Value | .268 | .123 |
| | Availability | .159 | .101 |
| | Government Initiative | 042 | .088 |
| | Mediator: Brand Image | | 0.343** |
| \mathbb{R}^2 | 0 | .617 | 0.630 |
| Adj R ² | | .603 | 0.614 |
| R ² Change | | .602 | .630 |
| Sig, F Change | | .001 | .000 |
| Durbin - Watson | | | 1.605 |

7. DISCUSSION

The analysis suggests that the green purchase intention is significantly influenced by Environmental concern, Social Influence, Perceived Value and Availability, whereas Government Initiative does not seem to have any influence on green purchase intention. Further the findings also indicate that government initiative negatively influence Brand Image. The finding could be attributed to the fact that consumers' perception towards government's ability to influence green purchase intention is low.

Brand Image is found to be partially mediating the relationship between Environmental Concern, Social Influence and Green Purchase Intention. The finding indicates that consumers of Electronic Products are conscious about environment protection and while choosing green electronic products they are not much conscious about the Brand Image. Social influence including of family, friends and peers do influence purchase intention towards green electronic products, while brand image does not play very significant role.

Brand Image is found to be fully mediating the relationship between Perceived Value and Availability and Green Purchase Intention. Consumers perceive a product to be of value if it is matching the expectations of performance alongside environment protection, the finding suggests that a green electronic product with good brand image will be more successful in influencing the green purchase intention. Availability of green electronic products with good brand image have a capability to influence the green purchase intention as indicated in the survey.

8. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

The study reveals that consumers are conscious about the environment protection and are aware of the damages an electronic product may bring to the environment. The full mediation effect of Brand Image on relationship between Perceived Value and Availability suggest that companies of green electronic products should be more devoted to building brand image while maintaining right value proposition to be offered to the consumer. It is also desirous from the companies to ensure availability at the place in right quantities to match the perceived value parameters and influence the green purchase intention.

Findings offer an insight into importance of branding and availability to successfully market green products. It may help organizations to appropriately design marketing mix strategies to satisfy consumers while earning profit and preserving environment.

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