

Impact of Demographics on Use of Green Products : A Study of Organic Clothes and Green Electrical Appliances in Urban Punjab

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Abstract

Over the centuries, the emergence of environmental concern has been at the top of the agenda at both national and international level. As customers comprehend the significance of environmental protection, environmentalism has been strengthened more in the marketplace. Ecologically concerned consumers have started favoring and expressing their demand for eco-friendly products especially in developed countries. Increased demand for green products has urged the business houses to be bowed towards being green and starting practicing green marketing strategies. This paper is an attempt to investigate the usage/non-usage of green products viz. organic clothes and green electrical appliances in Punjab. Also, the hypothesized relationships between demographic variables and usage/non-usage of green products were tested and suitable recommendations were given to the marketers of green products.

Key Words

Green Products, Usage/Non Usage of Green Products, Organic Clothes, Green Electrical Appliances, Relationship Between Demographics and Use of Green Products.

INTRODUCTION

Over the centuries, the emergence of environmental concern has been at the top of the agenda at both national and international level. However, the era of modern environmentalism came into the sharp focus in 1960s with the exuberant

pressure posed by the public. The wave of environmentalism led to the establishment of National Environmental Policy Act, 1969 in the United States. The issue of environmental protection was highlighted more and was incorporated in the national and international policy with the first celebration of Earth Day in 1970 and first United Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972 (Kinoti, 2011; The Public and Environment, UNEP, 1988).

As consumers have major contribution to the heightened environmental problems, any commitment on their part towards the environment can go the long way in extenuating the environment related issues (Jain and Kaur, 2004). The awareness regarding environmental issues and interconnections between the lifestyles and environment on the part of consumers and public at large is the very important for environmental preservation. Today, our lifestyle has changed significantly to cope up with the fast pace of the world. Today, more and more people are involved in an endless cycle of purchasing, usage and throwing away with a view that consumption of products is just meant for fulfillment of needs and desires (Ahmad & Juhdi, 2008). At the moment in order to attain the objective of sustainable development, green products and green consumption are being strongly recommended (Wang, 2009). Lampe and Gazda (1995) reported that in a European survey 75% of Europeans were in the favor of "urgent steps to protect the environment" and most "were prepared to pay the extra costs" (Lampe and Gazda, 1995; Knight and Dimmler, 1989). As customers also comprehend the significance of environmental protection, environmentalism has been strengthened more in the marketplace (Han *et al.*, 2009; Kalafatis *et al.*, 1999; Brown, 1996). Ecologically concerned consumers have started favoring and expressing their demand for eco-friendly products especially in developed countries. Increased demand for green products has urged the business houses to be bowed towards being green and starting practicing green marketing strategies (Jain & Kaur, 2004; Johri and Sahasakmontri, 1998; Keegan *et al.*, 1995; Meffert and Kirchgeorg, 1994; Doyle, 1992; Peattie and Ratnayka, 1992; Vandermerwe and Oliff, 1990). Green products are those which unite green concepts in the production, usage and disposal of these products. According to Ottman (1998) "Green products are typically durable, non toxic, made of recycled materials, or minimally packaged. Of course, there are no completely green products, for that all use up energy and resources and create by-products and emissions during their manufacture, transport to warehouses and stores, usage and eventual disposal. So green is relative, describing products with less impact on the environment than their alternatives".

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The studies pertaining to the area of green products and their usage have been reviewed in order to understand the issues related to green consumer behaviour, relationship between demographics and usage, methodology and to identify the gap exists in the literature in this area.

Laroche *et al.* (2001) studied the demographic, psychographical and behavioral profile of consumers who were willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products. The study found that gender, marital status and no. of children living at home were significant in differentiating between the consumers who were willing to pay more, where as age, level of education, household income, home ownership and work status did not influence consumers' willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products.

Rowlands *et al.* (2003) investigated the profile of potential purchasers of green electricity in their study in Canada. The study investigated the influence of consumers' demographical variables, attitudinal variables and socialization variables on consumers' willingness to pay higher premiums for green electricity. The analysis of the study reported that attitudinal characteristics specifically ecological concern, liberalism and altruism were best in determining the potential purchasers of green electricity. Furthermore, the study advocated that demographical variables were less useful in identifying potential purchasers but education, age and income were still significant.

Jain & Kaur (2006) conducted an exploratory study in India to explore the usefulness of the socio-demographical variables in segmenting the green consumers. The study found the significant relationships of socio-demographical variables with the environmental consciousness and advocated the potential usefulness of the socio-demographical variables in differentiating the segments of green consumers and in developing marketing strategies accordingly to reach those segments.

Tilikidou (2007) examined the pro-environmental purchasing behaviour of Greeks and analysed the influence of demographical variables, environmental unconcern and consumers' environmental knowledge on consumers' pro-environmental purchasing behaviour. The results indicated that education, income and age were significantly related to the pro-environmental purchase behaviour. Further, cluster analysis classified the sample into 3 clusters: conventional purchasers (33.75%), occasional pro-environmental purchasers (45.5%) and frequent pro-environmental purchasers (18.75%).

Gam *et al.* (2010) explored the relationship between mothers of pre-schoolers'

environmental characteristics, involvement with organic cotton clothing and children's clothing in general, purchasing behaviour of children's clothing (shopping frequency and amount spending), willingness to purchase organic cotton clothing and willingness to pay more for organic cotton clothes. Results found that 29.5% mothers shopped once every two weeks, 33.3% shopped once every two months.

Lin (2010) in his research on organic cotton products in Hawaii examined attitudes, behaviour, motivations and consumption patterns of consumers of organic cotton. The study tested the effect of environmental shopping attitudes, environmental shopping behaviours and prior knowledge of organic cotton on willingness to pay more for organic cotton. T-tests and chi-square tests were applied to identify the significance of association between tested variables and WTP more. Results of t-tests confirmed the significant differences for all environmental shopping attitudes between those consumers who were willing to pay more and those who were not willing to pay more. Similarly, significant differences were found for all environmental shopping behaviours between those who were willing to pay more and those who were not willing to pay more. Prior knowledge and demographical variables did not affect WTP more significantly.

Niinimäki (2010) conducted a study in Finland with an aim of exploring the factors driving consumers' decision for purchasing eco-clothing. The study investigated the impact of attitude and ethical interest on ethical purchase decision. The data was analysed by percentage analysis and the results reported that ethical commitment and ethical values strongly influenced purchase of eco-clothing, eco material, recycled clothing and ethically made garments. Quality and aesthetics were also found as important factors affecting purchase decision of eco-clothing. 94.6% respondents were ready to pay more for eco-clothing.

Young *et al.* (2010) investigated factors influencing consumers' purchase decision process regarding green technology products: cars, white goods (washing machine & refrigerators), brown goods (TV, CD), green electricity and small household appliances. The study found that product's environmental performance, product's manufacturing and second hand availability, consumers' green values, purchase experience, availability of time for research and decision making, availability, affordability and knowledge of relevant environmental issues were major factors influencing consumers' purchase decision regarding green technology products.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study has been attempted to meet the following objectives :

- To study the usage/non-usage of organic clothes and green electrical appliances amongst the consumers of Punjab.
- To investigate the relationship between usage/non-usage of green products viz. organic clothes and green electrical appliances and the demographical variables of consumers.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study was based on the primary data captured through the consciously designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was attempted to explore (1) demographical characteristics of the respondents viz. age, gender, income, education, employment status, marital status and number of children (2) Usage of green products viz. organic clothes and green electrical appliances. The study was conducted in the urban areas for two reasons: (1) Urban people are assumed to be more literate as compared to the rural population and therefore, the chances of urban population being more aware of benefits and positive effects of green products are high. (2) Likelihood of availability of green products is more in urban markets as compared to rural markets because of existence of retail malls and specialty shops in urban areas. In Punjab four cities viz. Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Mohali were chosen for selection of the sample. These cities, apart being important from economic point of view also represented the three geographical areas of Punjab viz. Majha (Amritsar), Doaba (Jalandhar) and Malwa (Ludhiana). Apart from this, Mohali, was taken as the city represented IT hub of Punjab state. Moreover, as the study was confined to the urban Punjab, the urban population of the respective districts of the chosen cities was more than their rural population. A sample of 400 respondents belonging to urban Punjab was selected on the basis of convenience sampling. The sample of 400 respondents consisted of 100 respondents from each of the four selected cities. The data collected from the respondents was analysed by using SPSS 19.0.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

On the basis of the usage of organic clothes and green electrical appliances, respondents were categorized as users and non users. Table 1 gives the percentage of users and non-users of green products. The percentage analysis revealed that majority of people were not using organic clothes and on the other hand, majority of people were using green electrical appliances.

Table 1
Usage of Green Products

	Organic Clothes	Green Electrical Appliances
User	129 (32.25%)	227 (56.75%)
Non-User	271 (67.75%)	173 (43.25%)
Total	400 (100%)	400 (100%)

Relationship Between Usage/Non-usage of Organic Clothes and Demographical Variables

With the aim of investigating the relationship between the respondents' usage/non-usage of organic clothes and demographical variables, following hypothesis were made :

- H1 :** There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the demographical variables.
- H1a : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the age groups of the respondents.
 - H1b : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of organic clothes between males and females.
 - H1c : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of organic clothes between respondents having different level of qualification.
 - H1d : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of organic clothes between respondents of different employment groups.
 - H1e : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of organic clothes between respondents of different income groups.
 - H1f : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of organic clothes between married and unmarried respondents.
 - H1g : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of organic clothes between respondents having different number of children.

Table 2 exhibits the frequency distribution and percentage of users and non users of organic clothes across various levels of all demographical variables.

Chi-square was used to test the hypothesized relationships between usage/non-usage of organic clothes and demographical variables. Results of hypothesis testing have been discussed in the following paragraphs :

Table 2
Relationship Between Usage/Non-usage of Organic Clothes and Demographical Variables

		Organic Clothes		Total	chi-square value	df	Sig.
		User	Non-user				
Age	18-25 Years	76(37.8%)	125(62.2%)	201	7.547 ^a	3	0.056
	26-40 Years	45(62.2%)	115(71.9%)	160			
	41-55 Years	6(17.6%)	28(82.4%)	34			
	56 Years & above	2(40%)	3(60%)	5			
Gender	Male	57(28.5%)	143(71.5%)	200	2.574 ^a	1	0.109
	Female	72(36%)	128(64%)	200			
Qualification	Under-Graduate	18(32.7%)	37(67.3%)	55	3.517 ^a	3	0.319
	Graduate	48(37.8%)	79(62.2%)	127			
	Post Graduate	58(29.7%)	137(70.3%)	195			
	Doctorate	5(21.7%)	18(78.3%)	23			
Employment Status	Service	48(27.1%)	129(72.9%)	177	11.528 ^a	3	0.009
	Own Business	12(22.20%)	42(77.80%)	54			
	Student	63(42.30%)	86(57.70%)	149			
	Homemaker	6(30%)	14(70%)	20			
Monthly Income	less than 25000	91(36.50%)	158(63.50%)	249	6.417 ^a	4	0.17
	25001-50000	20(23%)	67(77%)	87			
	50001-75000	9(32.10%)	19(67.90%)	28			
	75001-100000	5(26.30%)	14(73.70%)	19			
	More than 100000	4(23.50%)	13(76.50%)	17			
Marital Status	Married	42(26.40%)	117(73.60%)	159	4.112 ^a	1	0.043
	Unmarried	87(36.10%)	154(63.90%)	241			
No. of Children	One	16(32%)	34(68%)	50	5.899 ^a	3	0.117
	Two	13(20%)	52(80%)	65			
	Three & above	2(25%)	6(75%)	8			
	None	98(35.40%)	179(64.60%)	277			
Total	129	271	400				
	32.30%	67.80%	100.00%				

Age and Usage/Non-usage of Organic Clothes

The results of the comparison of usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the age groups indicated that there were no significant differences in usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the four age groups (chi-square value=7.547 and p-value=.056 ($p>.05$)). This implies that users and non users of organic clothes do not differ significantly in their age. Hence, hypothesis H1a is rejected.

Gender and usage/non-usage of organic clothes: The results of gender wise comparison of usage/non-usage of organic clothes suggested that usage/non-usage of organic clothes did not differ significantly between male and female respondents (chi-square value=2.574 and p-value=.109 ($p>.05$)). The results of Chi-square suggest. Hence, hypothesis H1b is rejected.

Qualification and usage/non-usage of organic clothes: The results of comparison of usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the qualification groups indicated that no significant difference of qualification between users and non-users exists (chi-square value=3.517 and p-value=.319 ($p>.05$)). Hence, hypothesis H1c is rejected.

Employment Status and usage/non-usage of organic clothes: The results of the comparison of usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the employment groups indicated that there were significant differences in usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the four employment groups (chi-square value=11.528 and p-value=.009 ($p<.05$)). This implies that users and non-users of organic clothes differ significantly in their employment status. Hence, hypothesis H1d is accepted.

Monthly Income and usage/non-usage of organic clothes: The results of the comparison of usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the income groups suggested that there were no significant differences in usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the income groups (chi-square value=6.417 and p-value=.170 ($p>.05$)). This implies that users and non-users of organic clothes do not differ significantly in their income. Hence, the hypothesis H1e is rejected.

Marital Status and Usage/Non-usage of Organic Clothes

The results of the comparison of usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the married and unmarried respondents indicated there were significant differences in usage/non-usage of organic clothes between married and unmarried respondents (chi-square value=4.112 and p-value=.043 ($p<.05$)). This implies that usage/non-usage of organic clothes differs significantly with the marital status. Hence, the hypothesis H1f is accepted.

No. of Children and usage/non-usage of organic clothes: The results of the comparison of usage/non-usage of organic clothes across the respondents having different number of children indicated that there were no significant differences in usage/non-usage of organic clothes and groups of respondents having different number of children (chi-square value=5.899 and p-value =.117 ($p>.05$)). This implies that usage/non-usage of organic clothes does not differ significantly with the no. of children. Hence, the hypothesis H1g is rejected.

Relationship between usage/non-usage of Green Electrical Appliances and Demographical Variables : In order to investigate the relationship between the respondents' usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances and demographical variables, following hypothesis were made

H2 : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the demographical variables.

- H2a : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the age groups of the respondents.
- H2b : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances between males and females.
- H2c : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances between respondents having different level of qualification.
- H2d : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances between respondents of different employment groups.
- H2e : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances between respondents of different income groups.
- H2f : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances between married and unmarried respondents.
- H2g : There is a significant difference in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances between respondents having different number of children.

Table 3 exhibits the frequency distribution and percentage of users and non users of green electrical appliances across various levels of all demographical variables. Chi-square was used to test the hypothesized relationships between usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances and demographical variables. The details of relationship between usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances and each demographical variable are discussed as follows:

Table 3
Relationship Between Usage/Non-usage of Green Electrical Appliances and Demographical Variables

		Electrical Appliances		Total	chi-square value	df	Sig.
		User	Non-user				
Age	18-25 Years	124(61.70%)	77(38.30%)	201	7.621	3	0.055
	26-40 Years	78 (48.80%)	82(51.30%)	160			
	41-55 Years	21 (61.80%)	13(38.20%)	34			
	56 Years & Above	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5			
Gender	Male	118 (59%)	82 (41%)	200	0.825	1	0.364
	Female	109(54.50%)	91(45.50%)	200			
Qualification	Under Graduate	39 (70.90%)	16(29.10%)	55	19.539	3	.000
	Graduate	86 (67.70%)	41(32.30%)	127			
	Post Graduate	91 (46.70%)	104(53.30%)	195			
	Doctorate	11(47.80%)	12(52.20%)	23			
Employment Status	Service	90(50.80%)	87(49.20%)	177	4.532	3	0.209
	Own Business	33(61.10%)	21(38.90%)	54			
	Student	92(61.70%)	57(38.30%)	149			
	Homemaker	12(60%)	8(40%)	20			
Monthly Income	less than 25000	150(60.20%)	99(39.80%)	249	6.309	4	0.177
	25001-50000	42(48.30%)	45(51.70%)	87			
	50001-75000	14(50%)	14(50%)	28			
	75001-100000	9(47.40%)	10(52.60%)	19			
	More than 100000	12(70.60%)	5(29.40%)	17			
Marital Status	Married	79(49.70%)	80(50.30%)	159	5.366	1	0.021
	Unmarried	148(61.40%)	93(38.60%)	241			
No. of Children	One	18(36%)	32(64%)	50	10.293	3	0.016
	Two	37(56.90%)	28(43.10%)	65			
	Three & above	5(62.50%)	3(37.50%)	8			
	None	167(60.30%)	110(39.70%)	277			
Total	227	173	400				
	56.80%	43.30%	100.00%				

Age and Usage/Non-usage of Green Electrical Appliances

The comparison of usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the age groups showed that there were no significant differences in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the four age groups (chi-square value=7.621 and p-value=.055 ($p>.05$)). This implies that users and non-users of green electrical appliances do not differ significantly in their age. Hence, the hypothesis H2a is rejected.

Gender and Usage/Non-usage of Green Electrical Appliances

The gender wise comparison of usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances showed that there were no significant differences in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances between males and females (chi-square value=.825 and p-value=.364 ($p>.05$)). This implies that usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances does not differ significantly between male and female respondents. Hence, the hypothesis H2b is rejected.

Qualification and Usage/Non-usage of Green Electrical Appliances

The comparison of usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the qualification groups indicated that there were significant differences in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the four qualification groups (chi-square value=19.539 and p-value=.000 ($p<.05$)). This implies that usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances differs significantly with the qualification. Hence, the hypothesis H2c is accepted.

Employment Status and Usage/Non-usage of Green Electrical Appliances

The comparison of usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the employment groups indicated that there were no significant differences in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the four employment groups (chi-square value=4.532 and p-value=.209 ($p>.05$)). This implies that usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances does not differ significantly with the employment status. Hence, the hypothesis H2d is rejected.

Monthly Income and Usage/Non-usage of Green Electrical Appliances

The comparison of usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the income groups suggested that there were no significant differences in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the income groups (chi-square value=6.309 and p-value=.177 ($p>.05$)). This implies that usage/non-usage of green

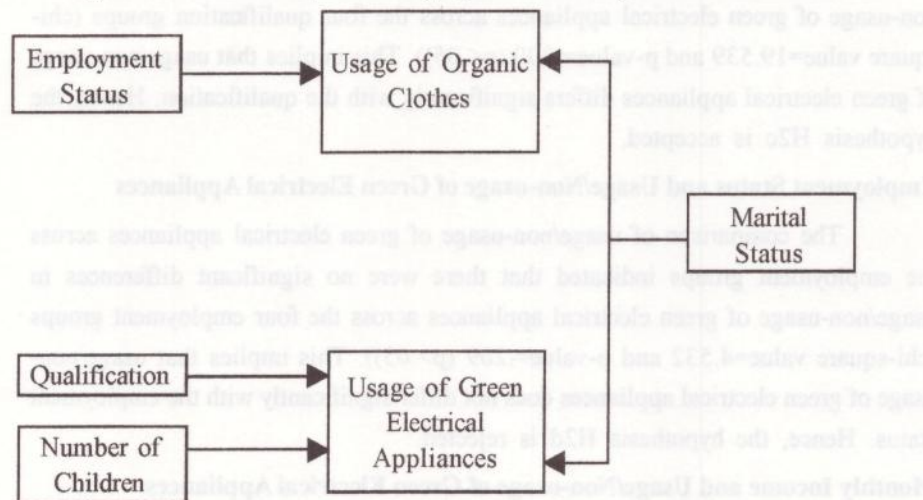
electrical appliances does not differ significantly with the income. Hence, the hypothesis H2e is rejected.

Marital Status and Usage/Non-usage of Green Electrical Appliances

The marital status wise comparison of usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances indicated that there were significant differences in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances between married and unmarried respondents (chi-square value=5.366 and p-value=.021 (p<.05)). This implies that usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances differs significantly with the marital status. Hence, the hypothesis H2f is accepted.

No. of Children and usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances: The comparison of usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances across the respondents having different number of children suggested that there were significant differences in usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances and groups of respondents having different no. of children (chi-square value=10.293 and p-value=.016 (p<.05)). This implies that usage/non-usage of green electrical appliances differs significantly with the no. of children. Hence, the hypothesis H2g is accepted.

Figure 1 : Relationship of Demographics and Usage of Green Products



CONCLUSIONS

From the above analysis, we see that majority of the respondents were using the green electrical appliances whereas, majority of respondents were not

using organic clothes. The reasons for not using organic clothes were most likely to be lack of awareness, non availability, and lack of confidence in the performance of the product and high prices. Most of the respondents were using green electrical appliances as green electrical appliances consume less power, emit lesser amount of carbon dioxide and have longer life as compared to the traditional products. The results provide an indication of favorable attitude of consumers of Punjab towards green products. However, due to differences in the demographics we may anticipate some changes in consumers' usage/non-usage of green products. The analysis has provided mixed results in regard to the relationship of demographics and usage/non-usage of green products. Impact of demographics on usage of organic clothes and green electrical appliances can be seen from figure 1. For organic clothes, only employment status and marital status turned out to be statistically significant, suggesting that users and non-users of organic clothes differ in their employment status and marital status. Whereas, for green electrical appliances, level of qualification, marital status and number of children turned out to be statistically significant which suggests that users and non users of green electrical appliances differ in their qualification, marital status and number of children. Age, gender and monthly income were not significant in affecting usage of green products. Hence, the study strongly advocates the existence of relationship between demographical characteristics of consumers and their usage/non-usage of green products. In light of the favorable attitude of the consumers of Punjab towards green products the study provides an insight to the manufacturers of the green products to focus their attention on the developing market of Punjab. It is also suggested that advertising strategies for the same may be framed considering the demographics of the market to be targeted.

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