

**IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR  
PRIVATE LABELS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:  
A STUDY IN SOUTH TAMIL NADU**

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**Abstract**

*Sustainable marketing has emerged as an important strategy for organizations with a focus on economic development, as well as social and environmental well-being. In recent times, private labels have emerged as an important trend in the retail industry, as they are cost-effective, of good quality, and are well-positioned in consumers' minds. Retail organizations are increasingly adopting sustainable marketing strategies, including green packaging, ethical procurement, waste reduction, and sustainable production practices. This is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12, which focuses on responsible consumption and production patterns. The main objective of this study is to explore the factors affecting consumers' purchase intention for sustainable private label products in South Tamil Nadu. The factors include consumers' concern for the environment, quality of products, price perception, and brand trust. For conducting this study, a descriptive research design is used, and primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire survey, where a sample size of 135 respondents is selected through convenience sampling. Percentage analysis, mean score analysis, correlation, and regression analysis are some of the statistical tools used in this research. The results of the research indicate that the most influential factor in consumer purchase intention is environmental concern, followed by product quality. Price perception and brand trust are also influential, though to a lesser degree. This research highlights the importance of sustainable marketing, which affects consumer behavior and helps build trust in the brand, thus achieving the sustainable development goals.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Marketing, Private Labels, Consumer Behaviour, Sustainable Development Goals, Responsible Consumption

**Introduction**

Sustainability has become a critical issue in organizations across the world, and it has been fuelled by factors such as environmental sustainability and the awareness of consumers that they contribute significantly to the improvement of society. Consumers in today's world are concerned about their contribution to society and the environment. This has, in turn, led organizations to shift from the usual marketing approaches towards the concept of sustainable marketing, which focuses on satisfying consumers while

ensuring the sustainability of the environment and society. Private labels, also known as store brands, are defined as the brands of products promoted under the retailer's brand. Products under private labels have recorded tremendous growth in the retail industry owing to their cost-effectiveness and improved quality standards. In recent times, organizations in the retail industry have started integrating sustainability initiatives into their private labels, such as the use of eco-friendly packaging and sustainable production practices.

### **Background of the Study**

The Indian retail industry has undergone tremendous changes in recent times, especially in the last ten years, due to a number of factors such as urbanization, rise in income levels, changes in the lifestyle of consumers, etc. Environmental factors such as changes in climate, pollution, and depletion of natural resources have become a major issue in recent times. The consumers have become more aware of these factors and are demanding sustainable products. This has made marketers concentrate more on sustainable marketing strategies and satisfy the increasing demand for sustainable products. At this point, it is of high imperative value to understand what factors affect the consumers' buying intention towards sustainable private label products.

### **Review of Literature**

Past literature has shown the significance of sustainable marketing strategies in affecting consumers. Kotler & Keller (2016) have stressed the significance of sustainable marketing by maintaining a balance between economic development and environmental sustainability. Similarly, the significance of green marketing has been discussed by Peattie & Crane (2005).

“Chen (2018)” has shown environmental concern and brand trust to be the key determinants of consumers' purchase intention toward green products. In the same direction, Kumar & Kapoor

(2017) have shown consumers' awareness to be an important factor affecting the purchase of sustainable products. Similarly, Ottman (2017) has shown sustainable marketing to be beneficial for building strong brand relationships.

Sustainability marketing, according to Belz & Peattie (2012), is a marketing approach to integrate environmental and social issues into business strategies. Similarly, Grant (2020) has also demonstrated the importance of green marketing strategies in order to achieve a competitive advantage in the market.

Joshi Yatish & Rahman Zillur (2015) investigated the factors that influence green

purchase behavior. According to their study, environmental concern, consumer effectiveness, and willingness to pay are the factors that influence consumers' green purchase behavior.

According to the Nielsen Global Survey (2018), a majority of consumers worldwide are willing to change their consumption habits to reduce environmental impact. The study also focused on the importance of younger consumers, particularly millennials, in preferring sustainable brands and products.

In a study on green marketing, Biswas Anirban & Roy Mousumi (2015) analyzed the influence of green marketing on consumers' behavior. According to their study, green marketing influences consumers' behavior to a great extent.

Testa Francesco et al. (2015) investigated the influence of consumer environmental knowledge and awareness on purchasing behavior for green products. The research also focused on the importance of education in green marketing.

Grimmer Mark, and Woolley Matthew (2014) argued that social influence and norm are important factors in influencing the intention of consumers to buy green products.

Paul Justin, et al. (2016) used the theory of planned behavior to study the impact of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on the intention of consumers to purchase green products.

Dangelico Rosa Maria, and Vocalelli Donato (2017) discussed various strategies in green marketing, which clearly stated that organizations adopting sustainable business practices would achieve competitive advantages.

### **Research Gap**

Even though a large number of research studies have been conducted on sustainable marketing practices and consumer behavior, it is evident that a majority of the research studies are primarily focused on general green products. Furthermore, a large number of research studies have primarily focused on developed markets, while little attention has been given to emerging markets such as India. Additionally, a large number of research studies have primarily focused on individual variables such as environmental concerns and brand trust. However, less attention has been given to research studies that take into consideration various factors such as product quality, price perception, environmental factors, and trust in brands. This is a key gap in this research field, and less research is available in this regard. Moreover, a major gap in the research area is regional focus. Little emphasis has been placed on research studies conducted in South Tamil Nadu. The

role of price sensitivity in these regions has also not been explored in detail, especially in relation to sustainable consumption. In addition, there is a lack of research on the role of sustainable marketing practices of private label brands in achieving Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. The connection between sustainable practices and consumer purchase intention in the context of private label brands is an area that is not fully explored. This study attempts to bridge these research gaps in the context of the key determinants of consumer purchase intention towards sustainable private label brands in South Tamil Nadu.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the level of consumer awareness about sustainable private label products.
2. To identify the factors influencing the purchase intention of consumers.
3. To analyze the relationship between sustainable factors and purchase intention.
4. To identify the impact of sustainable marketing on sustainable consumption.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

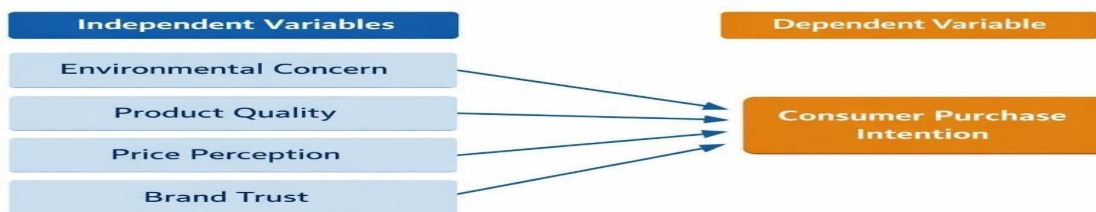
- H1: Environmental concern significantly influences purchase intention.
- H2: Product quality positively influences purchase intention.
- H3: Brand trust significantly influences purchase intention.
- H4: Price perception positively influences purchase intention.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of the study shows the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The independent variables and dependent variable of this research have been discussed. The consumer's purchase intention for sustainable private label products is considered as a dependent variable, and it is affected by independent variables. The independent variables identified for this research are environmental concern, product quality, price perception, and brand trust. Environmental concern is defined as the level of awareness and responsibility that consumers have for protecting the environment. Product quality is defined as the level of quality that consumers associate with private label products. Price perception is defined as the price that consumers associate with private label products. Brand trust is defined as the amount of trust that consumers have for private label brands. These variables are expected to have a direct and positive influence on consumer purchase intention. It is implied by the

framework that an increase in environmental concern levels, product quality perception, price perception, and brand trust would result in an increase in the willingness of consumers to purchase sustainable private label products. It is implied by the above model that environmental concern, product quality, price perception, and brand trust are the key determinants of the purchase intention of consumers.

### Conceptual Framework Table



### Methodology

The research design of the current study follows a descriptive research design in terms of examining the factors affecting consumer purchase intentions towards sustainable private label products. This type of research design can be considered appropriate as it can aid in the description of the population characteristics and analysis of the relationships between the variables. The major sources of information for the current study was based on primary research conducted by utilizing a structured questionnaire. A well-structured questionnaire has been used in the primary research to obtain the required data from the participants based on their opinions about various variables such as environmental issues, quality, price, etc. A 5 -point scale is used to measure the responses from the participants, which ranges from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” A total number of 135 participants were selected using the convenience sampling technique. This technique is chosen because it is easy and simple to use. The participants belong to the South Tamil Nadu region.

The data is systematically encoded, grouped, and analyzed using various statistical tools.. In the present study, percentage analysis was used for understanding the demographic profile and awareness among the respondents. Mean score analysis was used for understanding the level of agreement among the respondents regarding different factors. In addition, correlation analysis was conducted for understanding the relationship between different variables, while regression analysis was conducted for

understanding the impact of independent variables on consumer purchase intention. The validity of the study was ensured through the application of various techniques. First, the questionnaire was reviewed and refined for the purpose of the study. The analysis gives significant insights regarding consumer behavior and helps in understanding the factors which are the most influential for consumer purchase intention regarding sustainable private label products.

### **Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Demographic profile of respondents is defined as an overview of the characteristics of the sample size of respondents. The sample size of respondents in this study is 135.

#### **Age Group Distribution**

The majority of the respondents in the study fall within the age group of 18-25 years. The number of respondents within this age group is 54, which accounts for 40% of the total respondents. The second highest number of respondents in the study fall within the age group of 26-35 years, which accounts for 41 of the total respondents. The age group of 36 -45 years accounts for 27 of the total respondents. The least number of respondents in the study fall within the age group of above 46 years, which accounts for 13 of the total respondents.

#### **Gender Distribution**

As shown in the distribution of the respondents, it is clear that the number of males in the total number of respondents is 74, while the number of females in the total number of respondents is 61.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| <b>Category</b> | <b>Group</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>AGE</b>      | 18–25         | 54               | 40.0%                 |
|                 | 26–35         | 41               | 30.4%                 |
|                 | 36–45         | 27               | 20.0%                 |
|                 | 46+           | 13               | 9.6%                  |
| <b>GENDER</b>   | <b>MALE</b>   | 74               | 54.8%                 |
|                 | <b>FEMALE</b> | 61               | 45.2%                 |

## **Results and Discussion**

From the results obtained, it is evident that the majority of the participants (74.8%) are aware of sustainable products. This shows an increase in the environmental consciousness of consumers. The results from the mean score analysis showed that environmental concern and quality have the highest mean values. This indicates that the participants strongly agree about the importance of environmental concern and quality.

From the regression results, environmental concern has the highest influence on purchase intention. Product quality is the second factor. Price perception and brand trust have a positive influence on purchase intention, although the influence is low.

### **Future Research Scope**

The current study has given significant insights into consumer behavior in terms of purchase intention towards sustainable private label products in South Tamil Nadu. However, there are a number of opportunities that can be explored in further research based on the findings of the current study. First and foremost, the current study had a sample of 135 respondents. Further research can be conducted with a larger sample. Further, in the current study, a limited number of variables have been considered, namely environmental concerns, product quality, price perceptions, brand trust, etc. Future studies can consider more variables like green advertisements, eco-labeling, perceived values, social influences, sustainable supply chains, etc., to have a more in-depth understanding of consumer behavior.

Apart from that, comparative studies can be made in various areas like urban/rural areas. This will help in understanding the differences in the perception of consumers towards sustainable private label products. Research can also be conducted longitudinally to assess the change in attitudes of consumers over time, taking into consideration the rising awareness of sustainable consumption. Further research can also be conducted on how digital marketing contributes towards promoting sustainable consumption among consumers. Further research can also be conducted on how government policies and regulations contribute towards promoting sustainable marketing practices.

### **Suggestions**

Based on the findings of the study, some practical suggestions can be provided to retailers/marketers in order to make the sustainable marketing strategies more effective. Firstly, Retailers should focus on creating awareness among the consumers regarding the sustainable private label products through effective communication strategies such as green advertising. The focus would be on the eco-friendly packaging of the products,

ethical sourcing, and environmentally safe manufacturing processes. These strategies would not only enhance the brand images of the retailers but would also attract environmentally conscious consumers. Transparency in the sustainability practices of the retailer would be another area of focus.

Pricing is one factor that affects consumer decisions, and hence retailers should use competitive pricing strategies to make sustainable products affordable and accessible to more people. Promotional strategies, such as discounts and offers, will encourage people to purchase sustainable products. Furthermore, retailers should focus on improving product quality to meet consumer demands and satisfaction. Informing people of the benefits of using sustainable products will encourage them to make responsible purchasing decisions. The retailer can collaborate with other stakeholders, such as suppliers and the government, to promote sustainable initiatives.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion of the study is that sustainable marketing strategies play an essential role in influencing consumer purchase intentions towards private label products. From the research, it was evident that environmental concerns and product quality were the most significant factors in influencing purchase intentions, followed by price perception and brand trust. The importance of incorporating sustainability into marketing strategies was evident in the research, which showed that such strategies can boost brand reputation and trust among consumers. By embracing sustainable marketing strategies, businesses can get a competitive edge in the market while promoting environmental sustainability.

Moreover, the research indicates that “there is a significant opportunity” for private label brands to foster sustainable consumption patterns, provided there are effective marketing strategies in place. To conclude, sustainable marketing is not only a marketing strategy but a necessity in today’s global scenario. The implementation of sustainable marketing by retailers can play a significant role in achieving sustainable development goals, such as responsible consumption and production, while at the same time guaranteeing success in business.

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