# **Green Marketing: A Systematic Literature Review**

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#### **Abstract**

Firms' marketing strategies and consumer perception towards green products have been evolving quickly, and the emergence of the 'green world' is a reality now. This paper summarized an in-depth study of research papers, articles, and reports since 1990 and also provided insights into the consumer behavior in responding to, adopting the green products, and identifying the factors (whether personal factors or environmental factors) which are responsible for the significant inclination and rise in consumption of green products. The literature review highlighted that the benefits of using green products and their association with others like environment, biodiversity, and ecological sustainability were not successfully and effectively communicated to the consumers. It was also observed that competition in creating a brand in their respective categories, environmental values, and economic objectives are almost in sync with the green marketing philosophy and environmental values, but since green products are perceived as premium category products, consumers' buying decisions in favor of them was doubtful. The study also shed light on the future course to be adopted by the marketers in formulating sustainable green marketing strategies with the help of functional and emotional 'green positioning.' The review of studies suggested that the rise of 'green brands' in developing nations has begun. The paper's uniqueness is that it summarized the works of some of the most prominent authors, and it also captured the classification of articles based on source, country, time, and theme. It would help the readers understand the evolution of green marketing.

Keywords: sustainability, green marketing, green consumers, environmental variables

Paper Submission Date: April 6, 2020; Paper sent back for Revision: November 25, 2020; Paper Acceptance Date: December 10, 2020; Paper Published Online: August 30, 2021

ince the 1990s, customers have increasingly been concerned about the environment. The enlightened consumers expected organizations to be more sentient and considerate towards society and the environment (Peattie, 2001). Thus, attention was drawn towards green marketing. Due to this, organizations made enhanced efforts in the area of green technologies by manufacturing green products. Although the firms' involvement with the environment has been troublesome since the very beginning, it was not until the 1960s that it was included in the research agenda mainly due to stricter environmental regulations and growing public concern about the environment.

Green marketing became influential in the mid -1980s and early 1990s after the proceedings of the first workshop on ecological marketing held in Austin, Texas (USA) in 1975 came out. Several books were published on it thereafter. According to Peattie (2001), the progression of green marketing had three phases:

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.17010/ijom/2021/v51/i8/165761

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- The first phase (the 1980s) was termed "ecological" green marketing, and during this period, all activities were focused on environmental problems and providing remedies for them.
- \$\text{\$\text{\$\text{\$}}\$ The third phase (2000) was "sustainable" green marketing. It came into progression in the mid-1990s and early 2000.

Over the years, green marketing has gained prominence as a practice for green-oriented activities, catalyzing organizations' performance and magnifying their market repute (Lu et al., 2013; Stainer & Stainer, 1997). This enabled organizations to refashion themselves to wavering market conditions and forces, ensuring their triumph (Lazer, 2013). This substantial development calls for a thorough study of the literature to comprehend this transition from just being a concept of sustainability in marketing to emerging as a sub-domain in it.

## **Need for the Study**

Since the literature is so diverse, a proper understanding of the subject is required for appropriate categorization of the literature to understand its significance in the current scenario, which would serve as a blueprint for conducting systematic and explicit research in green marketing. Today, abundant research is available with respect to green marketing, varying from logistics and promotion (Boztepe, 2016), consumer behavior and green packaging (Zhang & Zhao, 2012), remanufactured products (Grant, 2008; Peattie & Crane, 2005), and these studies are spread across many countries (developed and developing), businesses, firms, and industries diversifying into several tools, techniques, and methodologies (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2011). Different and prominent reviews are available, and each one is considered unique in its own respect. Kilbourne and Beckmann (1998) discussed the characteristics of green consumers, corporate attitude towards environmental protection, environmental consciousness, environmentally friendly corporate behavior, and legislation and public policy issues. Chamorro et al. 's (2009) research focused on green consumers, green communication, concepts and strategies of green marketing, and recycling behavior. Leonidou and Leonidou (2011) discussed the importance of seven macro dimensions of environmental marketing and management. McDonagh and Prothero (2014) followed the categorization of literature made by Kilbourne and Beckmann (1998). These studies provided us with sound background knowledge on green marketing.

The major focused areas of these papers ranged from environmental consciousness, green consumers, strategies, financial performance to corporate performance, market assessment, and citizenship behavior. Despite the studies conducted by different authors, understanding or the grasp on the subject remains scarce (Chabowski et al., 2011; Cronin et al., 2011). The reason being the literature on green marketing is widespread, and not much has been studied as a standalone or separate discipline, except for by Leonidou and Leonidou (2011) and Cronin et al. (2011). Therefore, we were further motivated to study the discipline thoroughly.

# Methodology

The key objectives of the study are to examine:

- ♦ What is green marketing?
- ♦ How has green marketing evolved?
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- ♦ What has been the knowledge void?
- Perform a descriptive analysis based on time, source, country, and content.
- Ascertain the present status of green marketing in India.
- ♦ Identify what are the major gaps in our knowledge.

A number of databases like Inderscience, Science Direct, Emerald, Taylor Francis, etc. were used using the following keywords/key terms: green marketing, environmental marketing, sustainable marketing, green product, green price, green place, green promotion, green communication, green consumer, green consumption, ecological consumer, and environmental consumer. The study focuses on literature published from 2000-2015. Most of the papers were from acclaimed (peer-reviewed) international journals. Titles were checked, and abstracts were read to review a manuscript's relevance, and then the entire article was taken into consideration. A total of 121 papers were referred to for the descriptive analysis of this study from 1990-2015.

### Distribution of Papers Over Time (2000 – 2015)

It is clearly evident from the analysis that the number of manuscripts on green marketing has increased. Consumers around the world have become more sentient towards the environment (Ottman et al., 2006). Over the years, the number of publications on green marketing has been increasing as consumers and organizations across the globe have started to realize its increasing significance. We believe that with globalization, the world is becoming a small village, and various micro and macro forces like demographic, socio-cultural, politico-legal, economic, competitors, buyers, and markets will have a great influence on firms' activities and will stimulate further academic interest in environmentally related issues.

### Distribution of Papers Based on Country

The maximum number of articles on green marketing has been published from developed countries. The main reason behind this could be that these countries are self-sufficient and are in a position to focus on bigger problems such as the environment; whereas, countries like India and Pakistan are still developing and are struggling to become self-sufficient and are busy combating issues like poverty and illiteracy.

#### Distribution of Papers Based on Source

Sixty articles were from Emerald, 34 from Elsevier, 17 from Science Direct, 7 from *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 2 from Sage, and 1 from Springer.

# **Taxonomy on Green Marketing**

#### **Definition and Evolution of Definitions**

Over the years, many prominent authors have tried to define green marketing from various perspectives. Here are few definitions and important dimensions being added to them over the decades. We examined diverse available literature and found that most of the definitions were from 1976 – 2015 and had relevance in developed economies.

Green marketing was first defined by Henion (1972) as, "the study of the positive and the negative aspects of marketing activities on pollution, energy depletion, and non-energy resource depletion" (p.10). He laid great importance on environmental dimensions. In the 1990s, a sudden shift was seen, and various new dimensions

Table 1. Some of the Most Important Definitions and Dimensions of Green Marketing

Author Name	Definition	Dimensions
Carlson, Grove, &	In the 1990s, green marketing was thought	Market Dimension,
Kangun (1999)	of as a comprehensive and well-planned	Stakeholder Dimension
	management process that "identifies, anticipates,	
	satisfies, and fulfills stakeholders' needs" while	
	caring for the natural environment and society.	
Coddington (1993)	Green marketing is a carefully thought business	Consumer Dimension,
	initiative keeping in mind the consumers' perception	Environmental Dimension
	and behavior regarding the "preservation and	
	conservation" of the environment.	
Polonsky (1995)	All the activities which are carefully planned and	Environmental Dimension,
	carried out in exchange to facilitate and fulfill	Consumer Dimension
	any human want in any form should be carried	consumer Dimension
	out in such a manner that it not only serves its	
	sole purpose, that is, fulfillment and satisfaction of	
	human need and want but should have the least	
	detrimental impact on the environment.	
Doottio (2001)	Green marketing is a carefully structured,	Market Dimension
Peattie (2001)	-	Market Dimension,
	well-planned program built to identify consumers'	Consumer Dimension,
5 0.61	wants and needs and sustainably fulfill them.	Societal Dimension
Peattie & Charter	Green marketing is a "holistic" approach	Consumer Dimension,
(2003)	designed to identify the needs of the consumers	Social Dimension
	and then cater to them in a sustainable way	
	with profit maximization.	
Soonthonsmai	Green marketing has been defined as an activity	Product Dimension,
(2007)	designed and performed by environmentally	Environment Dimension,
	responsible and conscious firms to fulfill	<b>Business Dimension</b>
	the needs of consumers sustainably.	
Ottman (2011)	From the perspective of an organization, green	Product Dimension,
	marketing is an integration of environmental	Market Dimension,
	considerations into all aspects of marketing, from new	Environmental Dimension
	product development to the rejuvenation of an old	
	product until getting feedback from the market. In	
	other words, it lays the importance of the environment	
	in the entire ongoing process of the supply chain.	
Leonidou, Katsikeas,	They defined green marketing as strategically	Business Dimension,
& Morgan (2013)	defined marketing initiatives to accomplish	<b>Environmental Dimension</b>
	firms' business goals while enhancing their	
	positive impact on the natural environment.	
Kotler (2015)	Green marketing calls for socially and environmentally	Social Dimension,
	responsible actions that meet the present needs	Consumer Dimension,
	of consumers and businesses while also preserving	Environmental Dimension,
	or enhancing the ability of future generations to	Business Dimension
	meet their needs. It emphasizes the importance of	
	the conservation of natural resources in the present	
	and how it will help cater to the needs of	
	the generations to come.	
	the generations to come.	

were added to define green marketing. It was no longer about the environment alone, and the emphasis was laid on concepts like energy conservation, waste minimization, resource reuse, and was gradually seen moving towards consumer needs. The most important dimensions added were the market, product, business, stakeholder, and consumer dimensions. Some of the most influential and used definitions were given by authors, which are listed in Table 1.

After 2000, changes at the strategic level gained momentum, covering new product development, product modifications, and changes in the production processes. Definitions were seen to be more precise and broad in their perspective and could cover all broad areas of sustainability.

#### Categorization of Literature Based on Time

The literature on green marketing has been studied on two attributes, that is, time and content. From the time viewpoint, green marketing has been divided into two eras, namely green marketing before 2000 and after 2000. Table 2 and Table 3 show the status of green marketing in each era, thus tracing the history that helped in the evolution of green marketing.

From the content perspective, green marketing is categorized into five distinct categories: literature review, conceptual, framework, empirical, and application papers. Another classification is made on the theme basis. Papers have been classified into five distinctive themes (refer to Table 4):

- ♦ Ecological orientation
- ☼ Environmental strategy and consequences
- Environmental variables, responses, and buying behavior
- ♦ Green marketing mix and
- ♥ Others

This classification will help us understand the range of themes and give us a holistic view of green marketing.

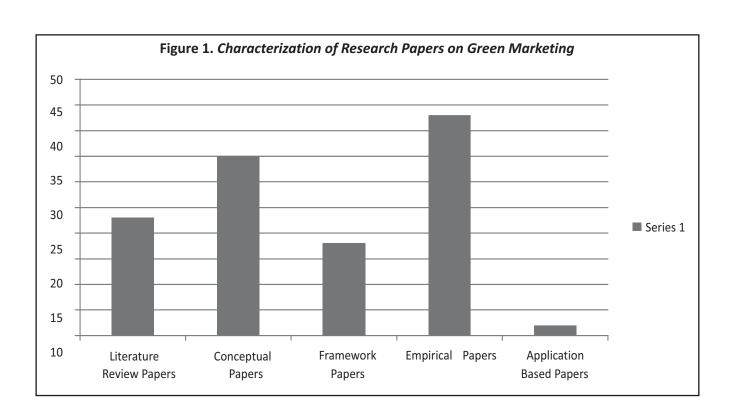
Table 2. Status of Green Marketing Before 2000

#### **Green Marketing Before 2000:**

- "Societal Marketing" concept was first introduced by Kotler and Levy (1969).
- Green marketing was popularly known as "ecological marketing." The first workshop and its proceedings were held in Austin, Texas (US) in 1975. It marked the first decade of ecological marketing.
  - Organizations saw an opportunity to earn profits, goodwill, and market share from their acts of green marketing.
    - · Academic research was limited.
  - The 1990s marked the second decade of green marketing.
  - Introduction to cleaner technology, design, and introduction of new, improved products.
    - The market growth rate did not rise to expectations.
  - Academic research gained prominence and importance in this era.

#### Green Marketing After 2000:

- Green marketing entered into the third stage.
- Implementation of advanced technology, strict governmental regulations, increasing awareness of environmental issues, and competition intensification led to increased quality citations of green products and consumer confidence regarding green products.
  - Consumers were getting more conscious and aware of society and the environment and its benefits.
  - Ottman et al. (2006) and Stafford (2003) proposed that green marketing was resurging.
  - Organizations started seeing environmental problems as an opportunity by incorporating authentic environmental features and ethical qualities (Curtis, 2006).
- Researchers found out that organizations with an inclination towards green marketing achieved higher profits (Menguc & Ozanne, 2005), market share (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004), greater levels of employee commitments, and increased customer satisfaction (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006).
- As a result, academic research on green marketing gained momentum.



#### Characterization of Papers Based on Content

It is evident from Figure 1 that more than half of the manuscripts on green marketing were empirical in nature

as opposed to others. It is also known as the first wave of empirical studies on green marketing. In recent times, the focus of the studies has shifted from conceptual to more data-driven publications.

### Classification Based on Themes

#### **Ecological - Orientation**

Ecological - orientation is a concept that helps in gaining competence in the market. Chamorro and Bañegil (2006) defined it, "as a way to conceive exchange relationships that goes beyond the current needs of the consumer, considering, at the same time, the social interest in protecting the natural environment (p.12)". Its application and performance are determined by the level of environmental values and principles that persist in an organization. A sustainability model was presented by Crittenden et al. (2011), where they talked about embodying sustainability into marketing, creating a competitive advantage, which indicates a shift from greening as a liability to a core ideology. Another remarkable benefaction was an illustration of the alliance between green-orientation and green marketing strategy, which deciphers how these strategies, if incorporated throughout the organizations internally and externally, result in business performance.

#### **Environmental Strategy and Consequences**

For green marketing strategies, literature is divided into types of strategies, applications for managing strategies, and their evaluation. In the 1990s, Menon and Menon (1997) defined the three levels of a green marketing strategy: strategic (corporate level), quasi-strategic (business level), and tactical (functional). Ginsberg and Bloom (2004) proposed a green marketing matrix by plotting sustainability of green market segment against

Table 4. Research Papers Categorized According to Their Themes

Themes	Papers	
Ecological - Orientation	Crane (2000) ; Stone & Wakefield (2000)	
Environmental Strategy and Consequences	Ageron et al., (2012); Biswas & Roy (2015); Bowers (2010); Jänicke (2012); Lorek & Spangenberg (2013); LeCren & Ozanne (2011); Lin et al. (2013); Mathur & Mathur (2000); Papista & Krystallis (2013); Rolland & Bazzoni (2009); Richey Jr. et al. (2014); Ramayah et al. (2010); Shang et al. (2010)	
Environmental Variables, Responses, and Buying Behavior	Awan & Raza (2010); Bhatti & Negi (2018); Jayanthi (2015); Balaji & Injodey (2017); Banerjee (2002); Beckford et al. (2010); Chen et al. (2012); Chan (2001); Chan & Lau (2000); Cornelissen et al. (2008); Mun (2009); Dean & Pacheco (2014); Elliott (2012); Gadenne et al. (2011); Hessami et al. (2013); Kim & Choi (2005); Kaushik & Gupta (2009); Lu et al. (2013); Lin & Huang (2012); Lee (2008); Mostafa (2009); Moser (2014); Sinnappan & Abd Rahman (2011); Ramayah et al. (2010); Shimpi (2016); Siji (2015)	
Green Marketing Mix	Andrea Blengini & Shields (2010) ; Canning (2006) ; Gallastegui (2002) ; Grankvist et al. (2007) ; Gill et al. (2008) ; Hartmann & Ibáñez (2006) ; Haddock (2005) ; Leonidou & Leonidou (2011) ; Wong et al. (2014)	
Others	Jin Gam (2011); Petrini & Pozzebon (2009)	

differentiability of greenness and proposed four types of strategies: defensive, extreme, lean, and shaded, which served as a decision-making framework for practitioners to choose the right kind of green marketing strategy for their products and markets. Mitchell et al. (2010) discussed sustainable market orientation as a new approach to managing marketing strategy. For evaluating the green marketing-oriented strategies, the literature was classified as affecting firm performance (Fraj et al., 2011; LeCren & Ozanne, 2011; Mathur & Mathur, 2000) and market assessment (Wong et al., 2014). Consequences of green marketing strategies were explained as innovation, strategic alliances, credibility, service quality, and improved public relations (LeCren & Ozanne, 2011; Mendleson & Polonsky, 1995; Richey Jr. et al., 2014; Rolland & Bazzoni, 2009).

### Environmental Variables, Responses, and Buying Behavior

Vermeir and Verbeke (2008) focused on exploring the influence of determinants as hypothesized by the theory of planned behavior (TPB) – attitude, personal behavior control, social norms – on sustainable consumption intention in general and specifically depending on consumer perceived confidence and personal values. Welsch and Kühling (2009) created a framework to explain people's preferences concerning green consumption by taking into account the behavior of reference persons and one's past behavior with respect to green products and personal characteristics and attitudes. Sinnappan and Abd Rahman (2011) proposed a model with new approaches to study the factors affecting Chinese consumers' green purchasing behavior. Kaufmann et al. (2011) created a framework to understand factors influencing consumers' green purchasing behavior from different dimensions. In this framework, factors like environmental knowledge, environmental concerns, effectiveness perceived by consumers, etc., were considered as the mediator variables. The factors were segregated as external (education, media, family, culture), internal (knowledge, attitude, beliefs, awareness and consciousness, concern), and situational (economic rewards and legislation).

Much research has been conducted to study what factors influence green consumers' buying behavior, and several frameworks were identified in the literature. The purchase intent of any consumer is influenced and can be altered by the above-mentioned independent variables resulting in favorable or unfavorable purchase decisions in relation to a green product or brand. Inadequate information, non-awareness, and presence of other factors fail to lend correct and favorable direction, creating a "gap" between the purchase intent and the actual buying action, ultimately resulting in "non-purchase" of a green product. This void or gap is known as the value-action gap (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). After a detailed study of frameworks associated with factors affecting consumers' buying behavior, inconsistent and incompatible results indicated that no specific framework could successfully explain the gap. Without understanding these, organizations cannot formulate consumer-specific strategies. Once organizations understand behavior attributes that influence conscious or intentional decision-making in favor of green products, they shall be able to formulate "consumer-specific" strategies for enhancing their market share.

#### **Green Marketing Mix**

The green marketing mix comprises of topics concerned with product, promotion, distribution, retailing, and others like branding and international marketing. In the product category, the literature comprises revamping green products and their contribution to innovation in terms of non-profit benefits. The former relates to functional environment-friendly benefits such as reduced resource consumption, substituting harmful ingredients, and recyclability and reusability properties (Holt & Ghobadian, 2009; Pujari et al., 2003; Zhu et al., 2013). The latter relates to innovations to non-profit benefits such as offering incentives to consumers engaged in product recovery activities (Abraham, 2011; Canning, 2006). Hartmann and Ibáñez (2006) discussed adding emotional benefits and logical benefits to green product offerings.

Promotion relates to environmental communication tools and their effective use. Extant literature on the content of green advertising messages relates to advertising messages and message credibility. Many authors have captured trend analysis on the greening of advertising and changing nature of advertising messages (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2011; Leonidou et al., 2014). Thus, the significant contributions of promotion-related activities are related to capturing changing nature of green advertisements and environmental disclosures for the degree of advertising greenness for focal points, evaluation areas, leverage aspects, and driving forces of environmental claims. Communication basically discusses the use of communication tools, use of websites (Gill et al., 2008; Herzig & Godemann, 2010), sustainability reports (Andrea Blengini & Shields, 2010; Chatterjee & Zaman Mir, 2008), and eco-labeling and environmental certifications (Andrea Blengini & Shields, 2010; Proto et al., 2007) as tools of communication. The main objective of using these tools is to create awareness and help in developing credibility (Cegarra - Navarro & Martinez, 2010).

In the case of retailing and distribution, green marketing involves the adoption of sustainable practices in retailing and distribution which include fair trade, ethical sourcing, and reduced resource consumption (Kumar, 2014; Nicholls, 2002).

#### Others

The 'Others' category consists of branding, positioning, and international marketing. Literature has studied building green brand equity (Benoit - Moreau & Parguel, 2011), antecedents of green brand equity (Ng et al., 2013), and the relationship between environmental orientation and brand value (First & Khetriwal, 2010). Green positioning literature consists of functional and emotional positioning strategies (Hartmann et al., 2005) and the significance of environmental strategic positioning (Da Silva Monteiro & Guzmán, 2009).

## **Green Marketing in the Indian Context**

Enlightened consumers are acquainted with the concept of environment-friendly products and their benefits. Still, they need to be updated regarding the needs of green products and the lurking threats of conventionally manufactured products. Thanks to our ancient knowledge and rich heritage of Ayurveda/herbal products, subconsciously, the green product concept is not new for Indian customers. The mass movement of the rural population to big cities is causing an increase in consumption of resources and energy, increasing greenhouse gases, and retrenchment on natural resources such as land, water, and soil. Despite India's strong policy framework and some successes, environmental degradation has not been arrested on a large scale. Hence, like all other countries, India needs to strike a balance between all the forces and aim for sustainable green development. Indian organizations are preaching green to build a positive image in the minds of the consumers. Organizations should make consumers comprehend the need, want, and benefits associated with green products. Green marketing should be able to create a lifestyle where usage of such products is considered normal yet important.

Talking about India, we believe that green marketing's future is very bright as companies have started to indulge in green practices and one major advantage with a country like India is that it is a young country. A country where youth is risk-taking and welcomes change, it is ready to try new things. Green marketing before was a new concept, and a country like India was not ready economically, socially, or culturally to accept it; companies saw it as a short term gain profit-making policy, but the new generation is learned and careful of what they are investing in and are quite environmentally conscious. They are well aware of their choices, have the purchasing capacity, and are ready to pay for environmentally sound commodities.

### **Findings and Gaps**

Based on the literature, it is evident that green marketing seems to be growing as an intellectual discipline of marketing. This literature review outlines the benefaction of previous research under each theme. It also captures the classification of articles by source, country, time, and theme and lists the authors and their works in the domain. It also helps us understand the evolution of green marketing over time and what is its scope.

Over the years, the number of publications on green marketing has been increasing as consumers and organizations across the globe have started to realize its increasing significance. In the early 1990s, the literature focused on the relevance of environmental marketing philosophy in changing orientation and marketing to achieve ecological sustainability. The literature after the 2000s proposed green strategies to achieve a competitive advantage in the market. Nowadays, there is a more formalized structure, and more empirical and data-driven studies can be seen in various sectors, which goes to show that green marketing is not restricted to a particular sector. It can be applied across different sectors, making it versatile and important. The study helps outline the current themes by classifying the literature into five themes that can serve as a blueprint for further research.

#### **Gaps Identified**

The first gap we came across is that most of the research works carried out on green marketing are basically in developed countries. Developing countries like India have a lot of potential. Having a massive population with a lack of proper utilization of resources is a significant problem; hence, developing countries need practices like green marketing to create an equilibrium between the major market forces.

The second gap which we observed is the lack of application-based papers.

\$\text{\$\text{\$\text{\$}}\$ Third, we observed that many studies had been conducted regarding green marketing philosophy and ecological - orientation, and authors have successfully related them with competitiveness, environmental values, and economic objectives. We feel that this should be further extended to study:

- What factors affect a person's buying behavior?
- How do green products create brand equity and generate value for money?
- What are the important moderating and mediating factors which affect a person's intention to pay? What are the primary functional attributes that a consumer seeks in a green product, and how do they help build its brand image and equity?
- Why is information on certain products perceived as credible while others are not?

Studies like the present one would help develop more comprehensive frameworks, which are dynamic and relevant to the current scenario, and would consider the maximum number of factors affecting consumers' buying behavior with respect to developing countries.

\$\footnote{\text{Fifth}}\$, we also feel that consumers lack awareness about green products and the benefits associated with them. Linking green communication claims with green messages effectively needs attention.

## **Implications**

The focus on consuming the 'green products' needs to be addressed, and the traditional marketing strategies will certainly not work, at least in totality. This study can help marketers or organizations in guiding about different

variables that are important in studying consumer behavior for green products, which will help them in guiding as to what factors can motivate a consumer to purchase green products as well as it will help them to build strong recall and recognition of green brands.

## **Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research**

A major limitation of the study is the dearth of papers on green marketing with special reference to developing countries like India because the majority of the studies have been conducted in developed countries.

The proposed marketing grid will enhance the buying decisions in favor of green products and reduce the marketing expenses incurred, thereby improving efficiency. In the near future, with the integration of artificial intelligence, the green marketing strategies need to shift their focus on the new decision-maker, that is, AI assistant (if not completely, certainly partially).

#### **Authors' Contribution**

Dr. Hansini Premi conceived the idea, need, and then developed the architecture for the review paper. She also extracted research papers with high repute, filtered these based on keywords, and generated concepts and codes relevant to the study design. Dr. Monica Sharma and Dr. G. S. Dangayach verified the process and supervised the study.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

## **Funding Acknowledgment**

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or for the publication of this manuscript.

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