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Consumer awareness towards green products: A study of rural women in Haryana

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Abstract

Consumer awareness of green products is essential for fostering sustainable consumption patterns and advancing environmental conservation efforts. This document underscores the impact of prevalent environmental issues like climate change, pollution and resource depletion on consumer behavior. The study was conducted in the Hisar and Mahendergarh districts of Haryana state during 2021-22, aiming to assess awareness about green products and the usage/non-usage patterns among rural women. Sampling involved selecting Block I and Block II in Hisar and Mahendergarh district specifically targeting the villages of Dabra & Neoli Kalan, and Bawania & Dewas resulting in a sample size of 100 rural women from each district. The analysis of personal and socio-economic profiles revealed key trends: 48% of rural women in Hisar and 56% in Mahendergarh fall within the 27-33 age brackets. Educational attainment varies, with 48% in Hisar having completed graduation or post-graduation compared to 20% in Mahendergarh. Majority of women in both districts (61% in Hisar, 76% in Mahendergarh) are homemakers, with smaller proportions engaged in farming. Nuclear family structures are prevalent, with 66% in Hisar and 52% in Mahendergarh residing in nuclear families. Mass media exposure is notable, with television and social media being primary sources. However, awareness of green products remains low, with only 22% in Hisar and 14% in Mahendergarh considering them while shopping. Despite this, 26% of respondents in Hisar and 17% in Mahendergarh express a favorable attitude towards green products, indicating a latent desire among rural women to contribute to environmental conservation. However, there is a need for increased awareness and education on green products, with marketers playing a crucial role in promoting sustainable consumption practices.

Keywords: Consumer awareness, rural women, green products

Introduction

Consumer awareness towards green products plays a pivotal role in shaping sustainable consumption patterns and driving environmental conservation efforts. As society grapples with pressing environmental challenges such as climate change, pollution, and resource depletion, there is a growing recognition of the need for more eco-conscious consumption practice. Consumer awareness refers to the extent to which individuals possess knowledge and understanding of environmental issues, as well as the environmental impacts associated with the products they consume. In the context of green products, consumer awareness encompasses awareness of eco-friendly alternatives, knowledge of their benefits, and awareness of the environmental consequences of conventional products

Environmental concerns such as global warming, the depletion of natural resources, and shifting weather patterns dominate today's discussions. These issues have a direct or indirect impact on people's behavior, particularly when making purchasing decisions. Human greed and the pursuit of maximum benefit with minimal effort have led to the degradation of vital life-supporting systems: land, water, and air (Smith, 2009) ^[4]. For example, the World Health Organisation (WHO) Reported air pollution in India causes 5, 27,700 deaths every year, 21 percent of communicable diseases in India are related to polluted water

(Mannarswamy, 2011) ^[3]. Moreover, National Geographic (May, 2008) ranked Indians at the bottoms of the list of 14 nationalities in environmental awareness. A heightened sense of urgency surrounding environmental degradation in India has spurred many ordinary individuals to adopt eco-conscious lifestyle changes. Consequently, the visible impact of environmental issues is prompting individuals to feel a growing need to take action in various forms.

This study wants to understand how people think about and notice eco-friendly products. It looks at what makes people choose these products and what this means for businesses, policymakers and those who care about the environment. By reading lots of books and articles, asking people questions and studying real-life examples, we hope to learn why people buy green products, what stops them and how we can encourage more eco-friendly shopping habits.

Objectives

1. Awareness about green products
2. Consumer attitude towards green products
3. Usage/non-usage of green products

Methodology

The experiment took place in the Hisar and Mahendergarh districts of Haryana state during 2021-22. To gather a rural sample from Hisar district, Block I and Block II were

chosen. Specifically, the villages of Dabra from Block I and Neoli Kalan from Block II were selected. From each village, 50 rural women aged 20-40 years were chosen, resulting in a sample size of 100 rural women from Hisar district. Similarly, in Mahendergarh district, two villages, Bawania from Block Kanina and Dewas from Block Mahendergarh, were selected, with a total sample size of 100 rural women from each village, amounting to 200 rural women aged 21 to 40 years in total. Data collection was carried out using self-developed interview schedules focusing on the consumer behavior of rural women concerning green products. This study wanted to find out what people know and think about green products and whether they use them or not.

Results

Personal and demographic variables of rural women

The results regarding personal and socio-economic profile of rural women of Hisar district and Mahendergarh District was portrayed in table 1.

Regarding Age group of rural women being surveyed, In the study of rural women in Hisar, findings indicated that 48% of the total sample fell within the age bracket of 27-33 years, followed by 29% in the 34-40 age range, with the remaining 23% aged between 20-27 years. Similarly, in the Mahendergarh sample, over half (56%) were aged 27-33 years, 26% were in the 34-40 age group and 18% were in the 20-27 age category.

Regarding educational qualification

In terms of educational attainment, 48% of rural women in

Hisar had either graduated or pursued postgraduate studies, compared to 20% in the Mahendergarh sample. The majority of rural women included in the study were married in both locations. (Fig.2)

Regarding Occupation of rural women

In terms of the occupation of rural women, 61% and 76% were homemakers in the Hisar and Mahendergarh samples, respectively. Additionally, 21% (Hisar) and 18% (Mahendergarh) were involved in farming. A small proportion of rural women were engaged in service and business activities, but the percentage was minimal in both locations. (Fig.3)

From view of type of family

66% of rural women from Hisar and 52% from Mahendergarh districts reported living in nuclear families, typically with small to medium-sized households.

As far as head of family is concerned

Concerning the head of the family, the educational background of the family head (husband for married respondents and father for unmarried respondents) showed that in the Hisar sample, 40% were educated up to graduate or postgraduate levels, whereas in the Mahendergarh sample, this figure was 20%. In terms of the occupation of the family head, it was observed that the majority were involved in agricultural activities in both locations. Additionally, most respondents reported a monthly family income of $\geq 20,000$.

Table 1: Personal and demographic variables of rural women (n=200)

Sr. No.	Variables	Hisar (n=100) f(%)	Mahendergarh (n=100) f(%)	Total (n=200) f(%)
1	Age (Years)			
	20-26 years	23(23.0)	18(18.0)	41(20.5)
	27-33 years	48(48.0)	56(56.0)	104(52.0)
	34-40 years	29(29.0)	26(26.0)	55(27.5)
2	Educational qualification			
	Upto middle	08(8.0)	18(18.0)	26(13.0)
	Matric	16(16.0)	23(23.0)	39(19.5)
	Senior Secondary	28(28.0)	39(39.0)	67(33.5)
	Graduate	32(32.0)	13(13.0)	45(22.5)
3	Marital status			
	Unmarried	11(11.0)	23(23.0)	34(17.6)
	Married	89(89.0)	77(77.0)	166(83.3)
4	Occupation			
	Agriculture	21(21.0)	18(18.0)	39(19.5)
	Business	05(5.0)	02(2.0)	07(3.5)
	Service	08(8.0)	03(3.0)	11(5.5)
	House wife	61(61.0)	76(76.0)	137(68.5)
	Other	05(5.0)	01(1.0)	06(3.0)
5	Family type			
	Nuclear	66(66.0)	52(52.0)	118(59.0)
	Joint	34(34.0)	48(48.0)	82(41.0)
6	Family size			
	Up to 4 members(Small)	48(48.0)	38(38.0)	86(43.0)
	5-7 members (Medium)	21(21.0)	16(16.0)	37(18.5)
	8 members and more (Large)	33(33.0)	44(44.0)	77(38.5)
7	Educational qualification (head of the family)			
	Upto middle	08(8.0)	23(23.0)	31(15.5)
	Matric	15(15.0)	17(17.0)	32(16.0)

	Senior Secondary	37(37.0)	40(40.0)	77(38.5)
	Graduate	26(26.0)	15(15.0)	41(20.5)
	Post-graduate	14(14.0)	05(5.0)	19(9.5)
8	Occupation (head of the family)			
	Agriculture	62(62.0)	75(75.0)	137(68.5)
	Business	09(9.0)	05(5.0)	14(7.0)
	Service	21(21.0)	10(10.0)	31(15.5)
	Any other	06(6.0)	02(2.0)	08(4.0)
	Unemployed	02(2.0)	08(8.0)	10(5.0)
9	Family Income (monthly)			
	≥20,000	70(70.0)	82(82.0)	152(76.0)
	20,001-40,000	20(20.0)	11(11.0)	31(15.5)
	≤ 40,001	10(10.0)	7(7.0)	17(8.5)

*Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage

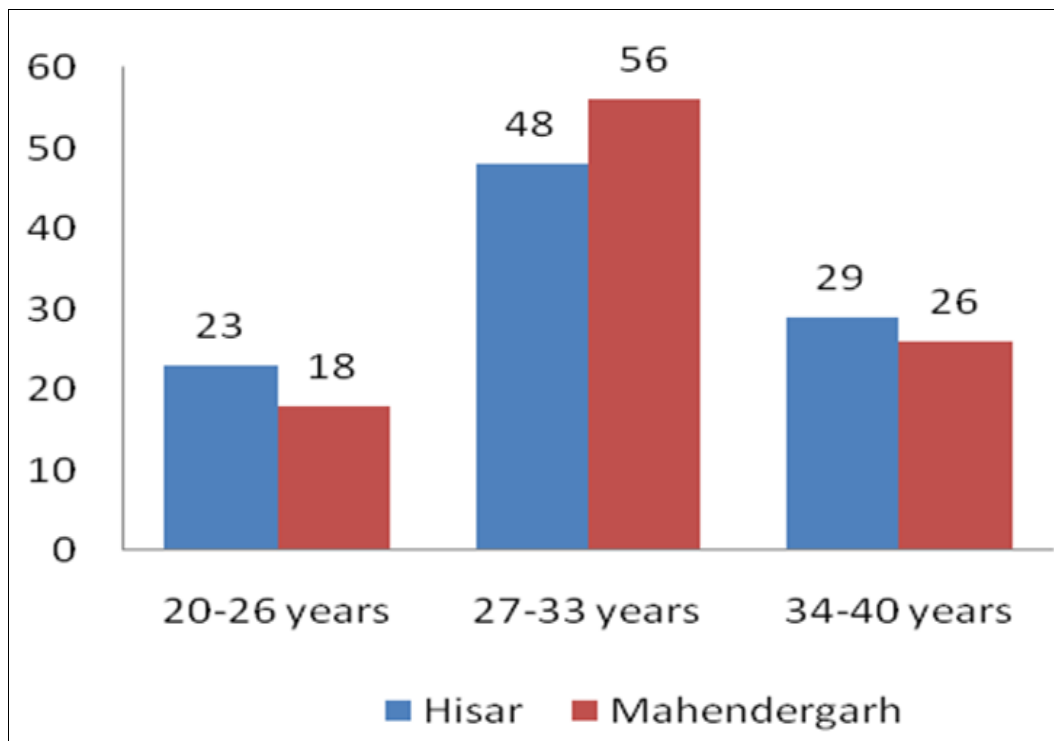


Fig 1: Age group distribution of rural Women.

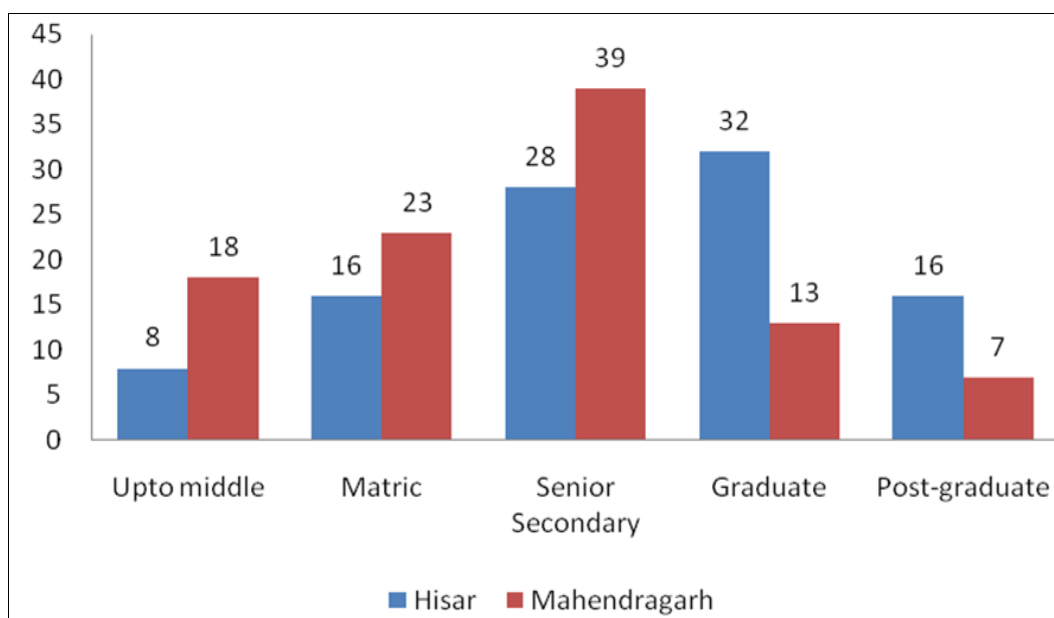


Fig 2: Educational status of rural women

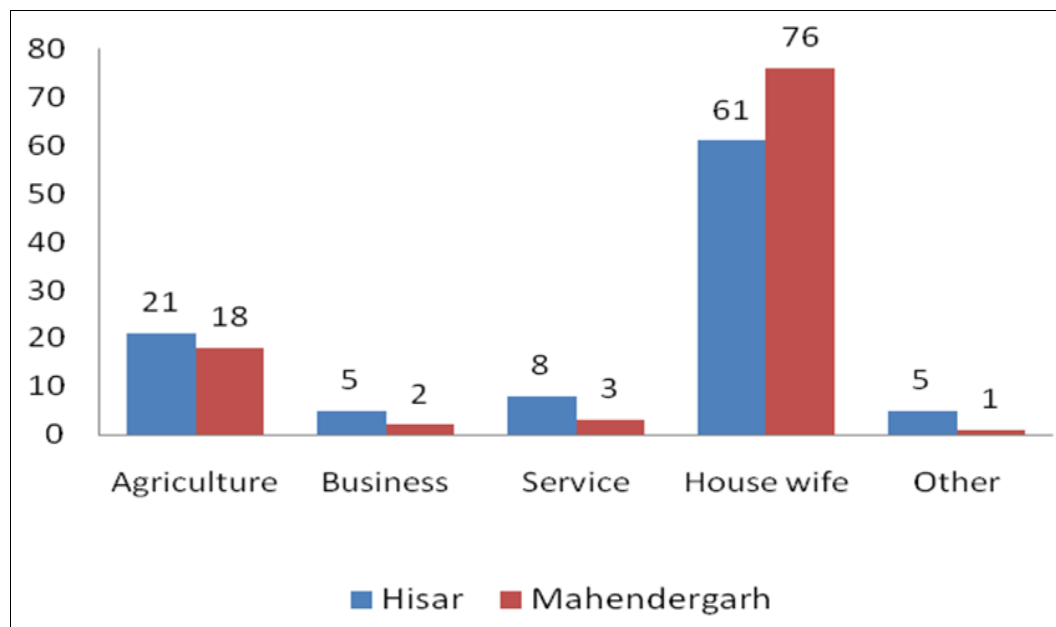


Fig 3: Occupation of rural women

Mass media exposure regarding consumer protection awareness among rural women

Table 2 displays the respondents' exposure to mass media. The highest frequency of mass media usage related to green consumerism was observed with television (WMS 1.47 and

1.43) followed by social media (WMS 1.42 and 1.40), and newspapers (WMS 1.11) for the Hisar and Mahendergarh samples, respectively. The least utilized form of mass media was magazines in both the Hisar and Mahendergarh samples (WMS 1.03 and 1.01), respectively (Fig. 4).

Table 2: Mass media exposure regarding environmental protection awareness among rural women (n=200)

Category	Hisar			Mahendergarh		
	F (%)	WMS	Rank	f(%)	WMS	Rank
Television						
Daily	67(67.0)	1.47	I	58(58.0)	1.43	I
Sometimes	23(23.0)			24(24.0)		
Never	10(10.0)			18(18.0)		
Radio						
Daily	34(34.0)	1.12	IV	22(22.0)	1.10	III
Sometimes	45(45.0)			38(38.0)		
Never	21(21.0)			40(40.0)		
Newspaper						
Daily	21(21.0)	1.16	III	17(17.0)	1.08	IV
Sometimes	28(28.0)			30(30.0)		
Never	51(51.0)			53(53.0)		
Magazine						
Daily	08(8.0)	1.03	V	11(11.0)	1.01	V
Sometimes	20(20.0)			16(16.0)		
Never	72(72.0)			73(73.0)		
Social Media						
Daily	45(45.0)	1.42	II	39(39.0)	1.40	II
Sometimes	35(35.0)			28(28.0)		
Never	20(20.0)			33(33.0)		

*Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage

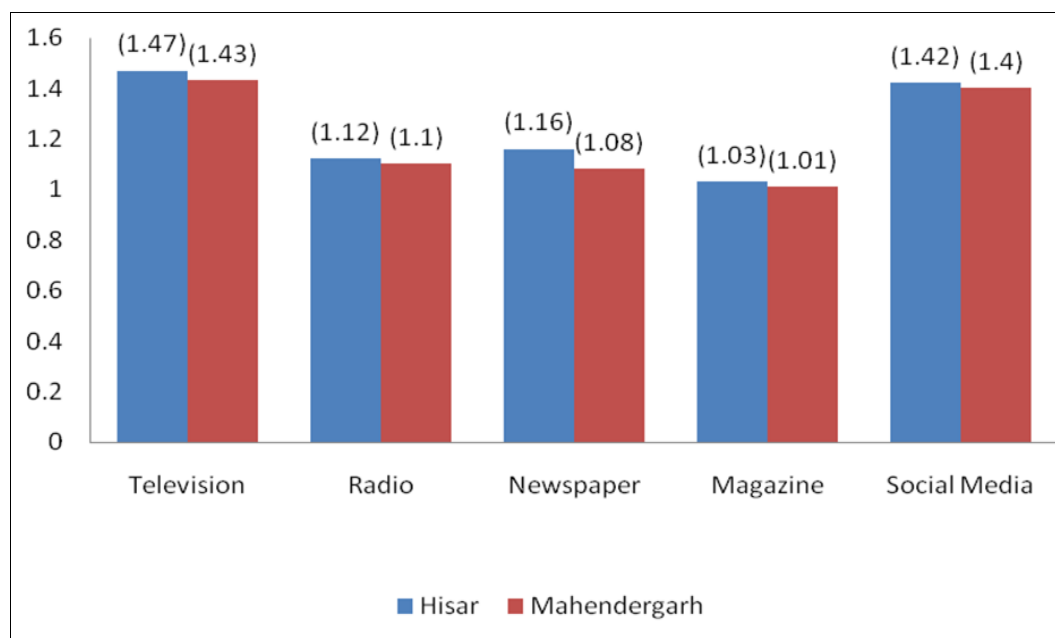


Fig 4: Mass Media exposure regarding consumer protection awareness among rural women

Awareness about green products among the rural women

Table 3 illustrates that only 22 percent of respondents from Hisar and 14 percent from Mahendergarh consider green products when shopping, indicating a low level of awareness and consequently, low purchase intention. This trend may be influenced by the fact that males typically handle most market-related activities in rural areas, leaving fewer opportunities for females to encounter environmentally friendly products. To gain a deeper understanding of perceptions toward green products, it's

crucial to explore consumer awareness and perceptions. The table further shows that 45 percent of rural women in Hisar and 47 percent in Mahendergarh are aware of what constitutes a green product. Additionally, 17 percent in Hisar and 14 percent in Mahendergarh view green products as energy-saving, while 6 percent in Hisar and 2 percent in Mahendergarh perceive them as recyclable. However, 5 percent in Hisar and 11 percent in Mahendergarh are unclear about the concept, considering green products to be merely green in color.

Table 3: Awareness about green products among the rural women (n=200)

S. No.	Particulars	Hisar n=100 f(%)	Mahendergarh n=100 f(%)
1. Consideration regarding green products while making shopping			
	Yes	22(22.0)	14(14.0)
	No	78(78.0)	86(86.0)
2. What occurs to your mind on hearing the term green products			
1	Environmental friendly	45(45.0)	47(47.0)
2	Bio-degradable	08(8.0)	03(3.0)
3	Recyclable	06(6.0)	02(2.0)
4	Energy saving	17(17.0)	14(14.0)
5	Non-toxic	12(12.0)	21(21.0)
6	Low carbon	01(1.0)	0 (0)
7	Water efficient	06(6.0)	02(2.0)
8	Green in colour	05(5.0)	11(11.0)
	Total	100(100.0)	100(100.0)

*Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage

Awareness regarding green products among rural women

The concept of green products is very new and emerging, and to a certain extent, they are different from mainstream products. In light of this, first of all respondent's level of general awareness regarding green products was measured by the experiment. Consumer awareness plays an instrumental role in determining their behavior. Hence, in the present experiment, an attempt has been made to measure the level of consumer awareness among rural

women considering the following six dimensions of green products:

- General awareness regarding green products
- Awareness regarding health benefits of green products
- Awareness regarding environmental benefits of green products
- Awareness regarding point of purchase for green products
- Awareness regarding various brands offering green products

- Awareness regarding various symbols/certificates declaring the product as green

Awareness regarding green products among rural women of Hisar and Mahendergarh

Awareness levels were measured using a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where option 1 denoted 'very low', option 2 denoted 'low', option 3 denoted 'average', option 4 denoted 'high', and option 5 denoted 'very high' awareness. As depicted in Table 4, more than one-third of rural women across both

districts exhibited low to very low levels of awareness concerning various aspects of green products. The percentages ranged from 41 to 61%, with respondents reporting an 'average' level of awareness in both Hisar and Mahendergarh. These findings suggest that while the majority of rural women displayed below-average awareness regarding green products, the awareness was generally vague and imprecise. Consequently, the findings attributed that rural women in Hisar and Mahendergarh lacked comprehensive awareness regarding green products.

Table 4: Awareness regarding green products among rural women (n=200)

S. No	Product Name	Hisar n=100 f(%)	Mahendergarh n=100 f (%)
1	General awareness regarding green products		
	Very low	16(16.0)	18(18.0)
	Low	23(23.0)	31(31.0)
	Average	46(46.0)	41(41.0)
	High	12(12.0)	10(10.0)
	Very high	03(3.0)	0 (0)
2	Awareness regarding health benefits of green products		
	Very low	11(11.0)	15(15.0)
	Low	20(20.0)	24(24.0)
	Average	51(51.0)	49(49.0)
	High	11(11.0)	07(7.0)
	Very high	07(7.0)	05(5.0)
3	Awareness regarding environmental benefits of green products		
	Very low	09(9.0)	14(14.0)
	Low	07(7.0)	19(19.0)
	Average	61(61.0)	49(49.0)
	High	17(17.0)	12(12.0)
	Very high	06(6.0)	06(6.0)
4	Awareness regarding point of purchase for green products		
	Very low	14(14.0)	18(18.0)
	Low	31(31.0)	23(23.0)
	Average	44(44.0)	54(54.0)
	High	08(8.0)	05(5.0)
	Very high	03(3.0)	0 (0)
5	Awareness regarding various brands offering green products.		
	Very low	16 (16.0)	24 (24.0)
	Low	28 (28.0)	31 (31.0)
	Average	44 (44.0)	41 (41.0)
	High	11 (11.0)	04 (4.0)
	Very high	01 (1.0)	0 (0)
6	Awareness regarding various symbols/certificates declaring the product as green		
	Very low	18 (18.0)	21 (21.0)
	Low	25 (25.0)	31 (31.0)
	Average	50 (50.0)	43 (43.0)
	High	07 (7.0)	05 (5.0)
	Very high	0 (0)	0 (0)

*Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage

Perception of rural women towards green products

In order to gain a comprehensive view of consumer behavior towards green products, the investigators has made an attempt to examine attitude of rural women consumers towards green products in rural areas of Hisar and Mahendergarh. In order to ascertain attitude of consumers towards green products, a worksheet consisting of fifteen statements pertaining to consumer attitude towards green products was developed. The respondents were asked to express their level of agreement/disagreement for each statement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'undecided', and 'agree' to 'strongly agree'. The responses were codified as: strongly disagree=1,

disagree=2, undecided=3, agree=4, strongly agree=5.

Table 5 depicts that overall attitude towards green products for majority of the Hisar respondents was found to be favorable (Overall mean score 3.3) whereas overall attitude towards green products for majority of the Mahendergarh respondents was neutral (Overall mean score 3.0). Hence, it can be deduced that on an average, rural women of Hisar perceived green products positively and exhibited favorable attitude towards them while rural women from Mahendergarh have neutral perception regarding green products. On the whole, respondents from both districts displayed favorable attitude towards different aspects of green products. These findings inferred that rural women

affirmed their willingness to use green products, they perceived environmental benefits of the products positively and also expressed their trust in green products, but at the

same time they were found to be little bit skeptical about the performance of green products which in turn, was reflected in their restricted willingness to pay extra price for the same.

Table 5: Examining attitude of rural women towards green products (n=200)

S.	Factor	Statements	Hisar (n=100) Mean± S.D.	Mahendergarh (n=100) Mean± S.D
1	Perceived benefits for environment	Green products and non-green products are alike	3.1±0.04	2.9±0.03
		State Governments should make rigorous efforts to promote manufacturing and marketing of green products.	3.4±0.02	3.0±0.05
		Deterioration of the environment is a serious issue and Green products can contribute in saving the environment.	3.7±0.03	3.2±0.02
		Environment deterioration is bound to happen and green products cannot help in protecting it	3.4±0.04	3.0±0.02
2.	Willingness to use	Using green products gives a sense of satisfaction.	3.0±0.06	2.8±0.03
		I want to be a part of green movement by using green products.	3.2±0.02	3.0±0.01
		Manufacturing of green products must be highly subsidized so that more companies can enter into manufacturing of green products.	3.4±0.05	3.2±0.07
3.	Trust in green products	Manufacturing/Production of green products is totally environment friendly.	3.3±0.04	3.1±0.02
		Green products are true to their environment friendly claims.	3.1±0.03	3.0±0.06
		I prefer green products over non green products.	3.1±0.06	2.9±0.04
4	Willingness to pay	I would agree to pay even extra price for environment friendly products to save our environment.	3.2±0.03	3.0±0.05
		Performance of green products justifies its price.	3.0±0.02	2.9±0.01
5	Perceived product performance	I am doubtful about the working performance of green products	3.3±0.05	3.0±0.04
		Claims of green products about health benefits are usually exaggerated	3.4±0.03	3.6±0.02
		Paying premium price for green products is a mere wastage of money	3.2±0.06	3.3±0.01
		Overall perception towards green products		3.3±0.04

With a mean score of less than 3 indicating an unfavorable attitude, a score of 3 representing a neutral attitude, and a score above 3 suggesting a favorable attitude towards green products, the analysis revealed that 26% of respondents from Hisar expressed a favorable attitude, whereas 17% of

respondents from Mahendergarh shared the same sentiment. Conversely, 22% of respondents from Hisar and 29% from Mahendergarh exhibited an unfavorable attitude towards green products. These findings are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Frequency distribution of rural women according to their overall attitude towards green products (n=200)

Overall attitude towards green products	Hisar n=100f(%)	Mahendergarh n=100 f(%)
Unfavorable (Mean Score<3)	22 (22.0)	29(29.0)
Neutral (Mean Score=3)	52(52.0)	54(54.0)
Favorable (Mean Score>3)	26 (26.0)	17(17.0)

*Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage

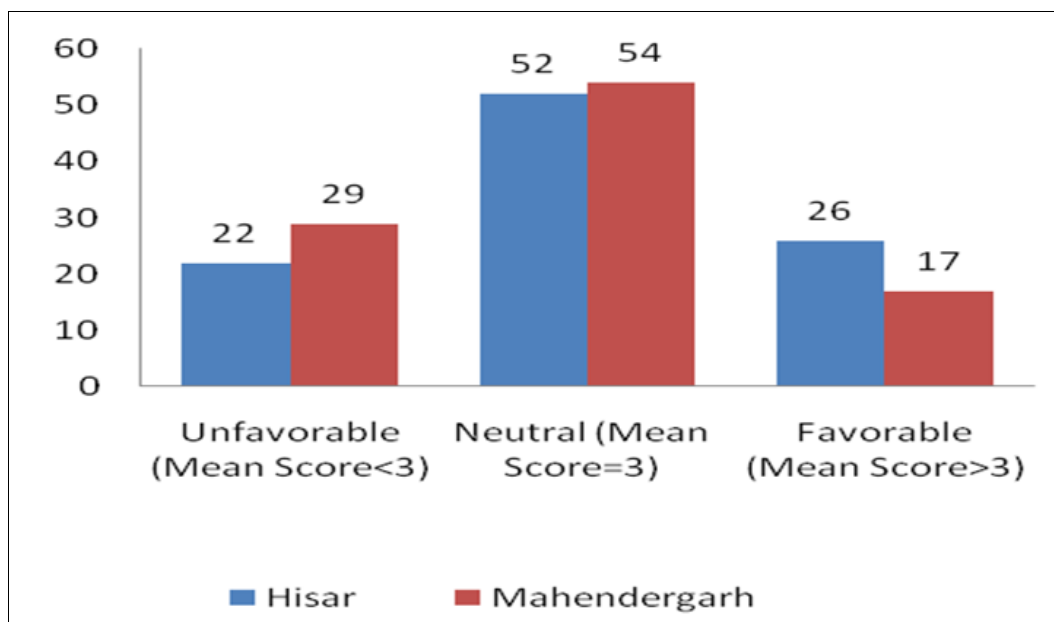


Fig 5: Frequency distribution of rural women according

Assessment of usage of green products

Taking threads from the literature, the study considered the four most common categories of green products *viz.* organic food, organic clothes, organic cosmetics and personal care products, green electrical appliances and household cleaning materials. In order to measure the usage/non usage of green products by respondents, a multiple response scale including the above said categories of green products was developed. The respondents were asked to check the category of green product they were using and were also allowed to check more than one categories if they were using more than one. Based on their responses regarding usage/non usage, the respondents were categorized as users or non users of green products.

The table 7 shows that out of total 100 respondents from Hisar and 100 from that of Mahendergarh, majority i.e. 72% respondents in case of Hisar and 70% in case of

Mahendergarh were not using organic food, whereas 28% from Hisar and 30% from Mahendergarh were using the same. It also indicates that majority i.e., 89% of Hisar and 85% of Mahendergarh were not using organic clothes, whereas 11% and 15% respondents were using the same respectively.

Furthermore, the table also conveys that majority i.e. 82% of Hisar and 61% of Mahendergarh were not using organic cosmetics and personal care products, whereas 18% and 39% respondents were using the same respectively.

The table shows that majority i.e. 39% of Hisar and 27% of Mahendergarh respondents were using green electrical appliances, whereas 61% and 73% respondents were not using the same respectively. Regarding household cleaning materials, more than one third rural women from Hisar used green cleaning products whereas this percentage was 24% for Mahendergarh sample. (Fig.6)

Table 7: Usage/non-usage of green products among rural women (n=200)

Sample	Parameters	Organic food	Organic clothes	Cosmetics and personal care	Electrical appliances	Household cleaning materials
Hisar n=100f(%)	User	28(28.0)	11(11.0)	18(18.0)	39(39.0)	35(35.0)
	Non- user	72(72.0)	89(89.0)	82(82.0)	61(61.0)	65(65.0)
	Total	100	100	100	100	100
Mahendergarh n=100 f(%)	User	30(30.0)	15(15.0)	20(20.0)	27(27.0)	24(24.0)
	Non- user	70(70.0)	85(85.0)	80(80.0)	73(73.0)	76(76.0)
	Total	100	100	100	100	100

*Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage

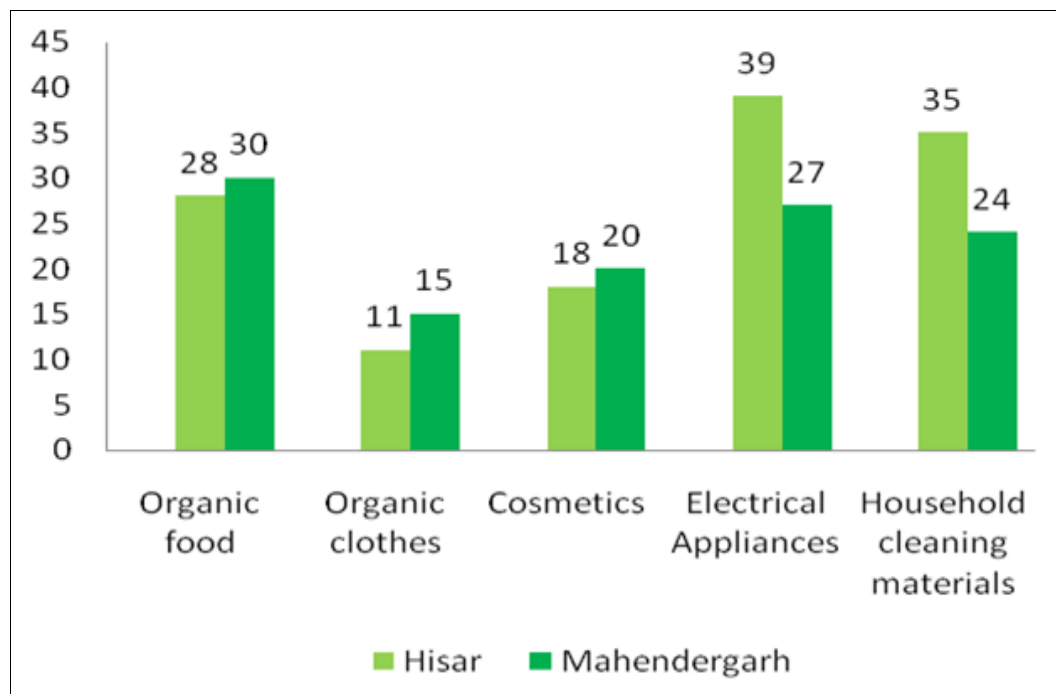


Fig 6: Usage of green products

Table 8 indicates that 34% of respondents from Hisar and 27% from Mahendergarh perceived the prices of green products to be higher compared to other products (Fig.7). Surprisingly, more than half of the respondents, comprising 53% from Hisar and 67% from Mahendergarh, were not familiar with or unaware of price differentials between green and non-green products. Additionally, a small percentage of respondents from both districts believed that

green products are priced lower than their benefits, highlighting a misconception and lack of awareness regarding green products. However, only 11% of respondents from Hisar perceived the prices of green products to be similar to those of non-green products, indicating a more accurate understanding among a minority of respondents.

Table 8: Perception regarding prices of green product as compared to non-green products (n=200)

Perception regarding green product prices	Hisar n=100 f(%)	Mahendergarh n=100 f(%)
Higher	34(34.0)	27(27.0)
Same/average	11(11.0)	0 (0)
Don't know	53(53.0)	67(67.0)
Lower	02(2.0)	06(6.0)
Total	100	100

*Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage

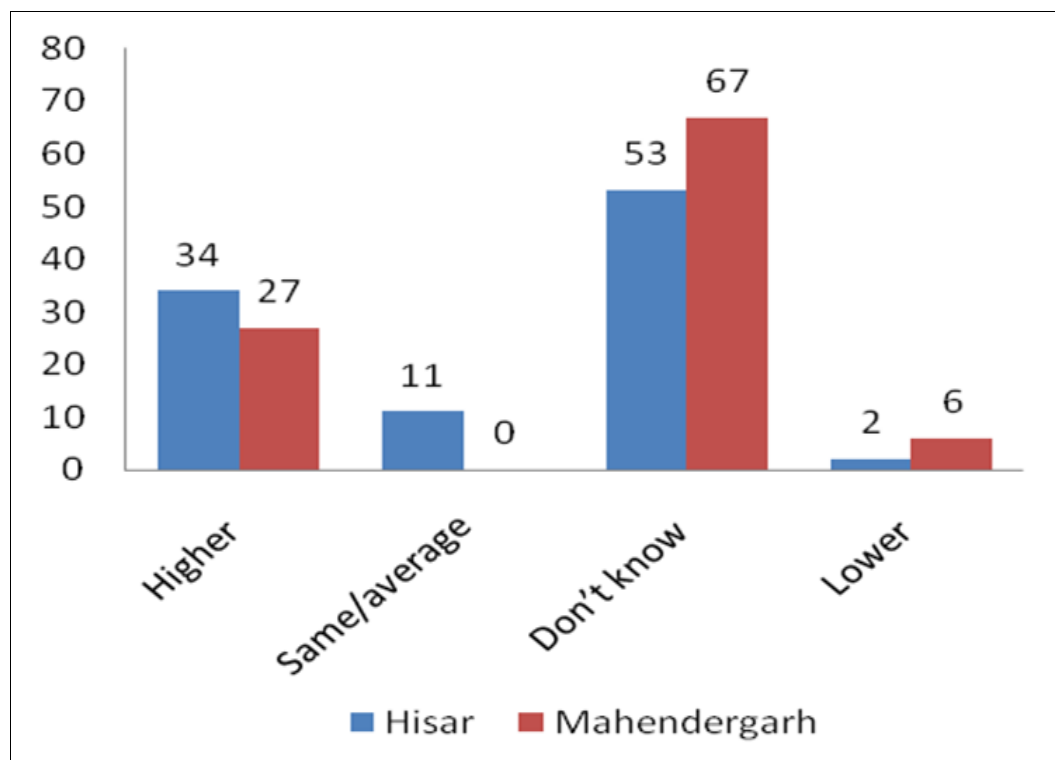
**Fig 7:** Perception regarding price of green products.

Table 9 presents that majority of Hisar respondents, (56 percent always and 33 percent often), were ready to purchase green products if the prices were same. Similarly, 62 percent (always) and 28 percent (often) of Mahendergarh respondents were ready to purchase green products if the prices were same. Only negligible percent respondents respond that they would never purchase the green products whether prices are same or different (Fig.8). Not only this, sizable no. of respondents were ready to pay higher prices. The careful reading of table reveals that the respondents have the intention and desire to contribute towards

safeguarding of environment but they lack awareness about how to achieve that in practice. This calls upon the role of marketers to spread the word of awareness. In green marketing, consumers are willing to pay more prices to maintain a cleaner and greener environment. Green marketing assumes even more importance and relevance in developing countries like India. Thus, there is a need to pressurize consumers, manufacturers and suppliers to minimize the negative effects on environment through green products.

Table 9: Purchase of green products in case of same price of non green products (n=200)

Perception regarding green product purchase	Hisar n=100 f(%)	Mahendergarh n=100 f(%)
Always	56(56.0)	62(62.0)
Often	33(33.0)	28(28.0)
Seldom	10(10.0)	06(6.0)
Never	01(1.0)	04(4.0)
Total	100	100

*Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage

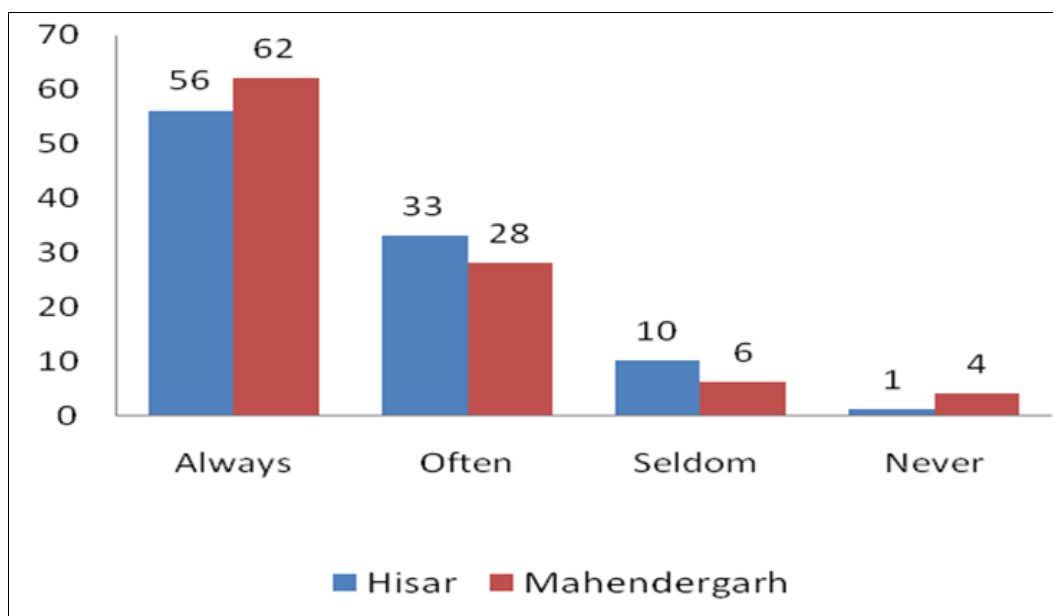


Fig 8: Purchase of green products in case of same price of non-green products.

Conclusion

The study looked at the backgrounds of rural women in Hisar and Mahendergarh. In Hisar, about 48% of women were between 27 and 33 years old, while in Mahendergarh, it was 56%. More women in Hisar had finished college or post-grad studies (48%) compared to Mahendergarh (20%). Most women in both places were homemakers (61% in Hisar, 76% in Mahendergarh), with fewer working in farming. Many lived in nuclear families (66% in Hisar, 52% in Mahendergarh). Their families often had a monthly income of at least ₹20,000. They watched a lot of TV and used social media. But not many knew or cared about green products when shopping (only 22% in Hisar, 14% in Mahendergarh), showing a gap in understanding. Some were positive about green products (26% in Hisar, 17% in Mahendergarh), but some were negative (22% in Hisar, 29% in Mahendergarh). Most showed interest in green products but were unsure about paying more for them. Many didn't know the price difference between green and non-green items. Still, many were willing to buy green products if they were priced similarly to non-green ones, showing a desire to help the environment. But there's a need for more education about green products and their benefits. Advertisers can help with this, promoting eco-friendly shopping habits, especially in places like India where people are realizing the importance of protecting the environment.

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