



## Attitudes towards green marketing and consumer behaviour among farmers in Thanjavur: case study on sustainable agricultural inputs

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### Abstract

The incorporation of green marketing in the agricultural field is gaining momentum as a strategy for promoting ecological sustainability. Farmers in the Thanjavur region of Tamil Nadu, which is an agricultural powerhouse, are now increasingly exposed to sustainable inputs such as organic fertilisers and bio-pesticides, along with water-saving irrigation technologies. This paper analyses the farmers' perception towards green marketing and their resulting consumer behaviour in relation to buying eco-friendly agricultural inputs. The study found that perceived utility, environmental concern, and trust positively motivate purchase behaviour while worry about costs and unavailability locally inhibit it. In addition, concerning green marketing related to agriculture, attitudes are changed more by social circles of fellow farmers and extension officers than through advertisements or online platforms. Based on these results, rural economies that primarily depend on agriculture can strengthen sustainable consumption if a need-oriented green marketing designed specifically for farmers is adopted. Also, the research emphasises strategies around traditional trust-building associated with farming alongside practices of green marketing.

**Keywords:** Green marketing, sustainable agriculture, consumer behaviour, farmers, Thanjavur

### Introduction

Productivity improvement and environmental conservation are increasingly becoming the two key challenges for Indian farmers. An ecological shift from chemicals to more sustainable 'green' farming practices such as bio-fertilisers, organic manure, bio-pesticides, and eco-friendly irrigation systems is underway in the country. Growing awareness about maintaining ecological balance and soil health is facilitating this gradual change among farmers in Thanjavur, which is known as the "Rice Bowl of Tamil Nadu." This change has also been supported by increasing green marketing campaigns encouraging adoption of sustainable inputs.

It has long been understood that farmers make rational choices based on cost-benefit analyses concerning the effectiveness of inputs versus productivity (Murugesan & Muthuraj 2018) <sup>[8]</sup>. Recently, more and more researchers have started understanding social, emotional, and psychological factors alongside rational thinking in farming decisions (Ravichandran & Thomas 2020) <sup>[9]</sup>. Social dynamics such as peer influence or trust in suppliers along with concern for eco-friendliness are now becoming crucial to explain farmer buying behaviour particularly towards environmentally friendly products (Karthikeyan & Joseph 2021) <sup>[6]</sup>.

The focus of green marketing pivots on the functional attributes of agricultural products, as well as their ecological consequences. It concerns elements such as the ecological packaging guidelines, promotion strategies, and any other ethical claims made regarding the safety for nature (Singh & Rajalakshmi, 2019) <sup>[11]</sup>. In contrast to more progressive regions with developed markets that incorporate advertisement cycles into bulk buying schemes like Switzerland or France, farmers in Thanjavur's hinterland

where age-old customs and seasons dictate dominant rhythms would need aid incorporating local wisdom into farming practices.

In this context one can say that in agricultural markets even small-scale farmers have different avenues they can turn to gather information about an innovation such as new products: input dealers for example extension officers as well as peer farmers and agricultural exhibitions. The decision-making process is not immediate after gathering all relevant pieces of information because previously gained knowledge, personal experiences, perceived outcome value, and costs all contribute significantly towards making a rational decision. Hence why understanding farmers' psychographic consumer profile when it comes to buying eco-friendly products will require investigating deeper levels related to such farmers' mindsets: attitudes towards them overall driving factors behind eco-friendly purchases including obstacles encountered when trying these options out for day-to-day living.

This research aims to analyse green marketing perception among farmers in Thanjavur and evaluate its impact on their purchasing behaviour concerning eco-friendly agricultural inputs. There is an understanding gap at the grassroots level regarding perceptions of green marketing, even with national or state-level policies supporting organic or sustainable farming. This study seeks to provide evidence that helps understand the region-specific factors and challenges concerning the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices.

### Theoretical Background

#### 1. Green Marketing and Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness is a construct for measuring the adoption of new technology, particularly in relation to

business performance, defined as the belief held by consumers that using an offered product or service will lead to enhanced performance (Davis, 1989) [3]. In agriculture, green inputs are considered useful by farmers if they augment crop yield and soil fertility/pest resistance while being environmentally friendly. The marketing strategy used promotes these agricultural inputs as “green,” stressing their natural composition and long-term benefits on soil health. Adoption is more likely when attitude toward usefulness is favourable, even if outcomes are slow at first (Sathya & Palanisamy, 2020) [10]. Thus, the perceived utility of green inputs significantly influences farmer behaviour.

## 2. Green Marketing and Environmental Concern

Environmental concern is the mindset of individuals and groups who engage in ecological thinking (Dunlap et al., 2000) [4]. In agriculture, eco-savvy farmers prefer to be proactive, supporting green movements, minimising chemical applications, and practising sustainability (Sundaram & Murthy, 2022) [12]. Marketing aimed at farmers focusing on eco-safety as well as soil conservation appeals to environment-friendly farming practitioners. Environmentally conscious farmers also care about conserving water, protecting biodiversity, as well as climate change which is becoming crucial in farming in drought-prone areas such as Thanjavur.

## 3. Green Marketing and Trust in Product Claims

Trust is imperative for rural consumers across agriculture and allied sectors dealing with low product homogenisation like sustainable agriculture. Farmers from Thanjavur predominantly use direct interpersonal trust that emanates from personal interactions over a lengthy duration, word-of-mouth from friends or colleagues, and dealings with local vendors to assess green products (eco-friendly) credibility. Without credibility mainstream marketed products are presumed untrustworthy under suspicion of ‘greenwashing’ (Jayakumar & Meenakshi, 2019) [5]. Trust can be created through certified labels, endorsements by agricultural universities along with fellow farmers’ testimonies which significantly affect purchasing behaviour.

## 4. Green Marketing and Economic Constraints

While attitudes towards sustainability are positive, farmers tend to be more price-sensitive and risk-averse. For example, the upfront investment in organic seeds, bio-fertilisers, or even compostable packaging is higher than purchasing non-organic counterparts. This poses a challenge for small and marginal farmers, who make up a large proportion of the population in Thanjavur. Thus, financial constraints severely stall the adoption of environmentally friendly farming practices despite genuine appreciation for their green and holistic eco-friendly products (Loganathan & Rajendran, 2021) [7].

## 5. Green Marketing and Social Influence

The immediate peer group within the agricultural sector profoundly impacts farmers’ choices. Social learning and observational behaviour are prevalent in rural areas where “success stories” from neighbouring farms have great influence on the specific inputs that they select. In this regard, green marketing can utilise social influence facilitating farmer field schools, demo plots or cooperative training sessions. Especially those trying sustainable alternatives for the very first time seem to respond more

readily to endorsements coming from peers rather than branded advertising (Anbarasan & Deepa, 2018) [2].

## Hypotheses of the Study

Drawing from the previously discussed theoretical frameworks, the following hypotheses are proposed to investigate the relationships linking different components of green marketing with consumer behaviour of farmers in Thanjavur:

- **H1:** Perceived usefulness of green agricultural inputs positively impacts consumer behaviour among farmers.
- **H2:** Environmental concern positively impacts farmers’ consumer behaviour towards sustainable agricultural inputs.
- **H3:** Trust in green product claims has a significant and positive impact on farmers’ consumer behaviour.
- **H4:** Economic factors adversely affect farmers’ consumer participation towards green agricultural products.
- **H5:** Sociological arguments from fellow farmers and members of society positively influence farmers’ adoption of green inputs.

These hypotheses will help analyse how attitudes towards green marketing integrate into agrarian consumer behaviour in Thanjavur, particularly regarding sustainable input usage.

## Methodology

The study was conducted in the Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu, which is well known for intensive agriculture and traditional rice farming. This research aims to understand farmers’ perceptions of green marketing as well as their purchasing behaviour concerning sustainable agricultural inputs such as organic fertilisers, bio-pesticides, and products based on compost.

Another objective was to examine perception factors such as usefulness of the product and its environmental considerations, trust towards claims made, economic limitations, social pressure evaluation parameters, and overall evaluation which were inclusive indicators of green consumer behaviour. To cater to English and Tamil speakers alike, both versions of the questionnaire were prepared ensuring ease while responding. The items were ranked on a 5-point Likert scale where “Strongly Disagree” (1) equalled the lowest response and “Strongly Agree” (5) represented highest approval. Through random sampling, respondents were chosen. The study sample included 350 farmers comprising small and medium scale cultivators from various blocks within Thanjavur district. Out of 350 questionnaires that were distributed, 310 were returned duly filled and complete in all respects. Following data cleaning alongside verification processes, 300 validated responses remained which formed the basis for final analysis. Descriptive statistics, correlation, reliability and regression testing as well as reliability assessment were used in the analysis of data. SEM is applied for testing the proposed relationships between the variables. Data analysis and modelling were performed using SPSS and AMOS software. The research design was exploratory as well as explanatory focused on attitudes identification; in this case assessing farmers’ green marketing attitudes while also examining their underlying behavioural implications. The sample comprised different categories of farmers with respect to income level, education level, land size, and social status so that meaningful generalisations could be drawn.

**Measurement of Scale**

The constructs for this study were measured with the aid of pre-existing validated scales which were modified to fit the agricultural paradigm of Thanjavur. Each construct was measured using multiple items and a five-point Likert scale where 1 indicated Strongly Disagree and 5 indicated Strongly Agree. The details are given below regarding the scale sources, modifications done, etcetera: Perceived Usefulness was measured based on the scale derived from Davis (1989) [3] as adjusted by Sathya and Palanisamy (2020) [10] focusing on agriculture, considering input sustainability’s impact on soil health and crop productivity. Soil degradation, water pollution concerns, chemical residue contamination along with other similar worries in farming were utilised to evaluate Environmental Concern stemmed from the Environmental Concern Scale of Dunlap et al. (2000) [4]. Trust in Product Claims was evaluated through belief statements cited from Jayakumar and Meenakshi (2019) [5] concerning farmers’ trust in green labels, suppliers’ trustworthiness, and post-usage results observability.

Economic Constraints pertains to affordability perceptions, cost-benefit perception, financial risk assessment regarding green inputs deemed purchases alongside affordability-adjusted concepts from Loganathan and Rajendran (2021) [7]. Social Influence was assessed using items drawn from Anbarasan and Deepa (2018) [2] which included peer influence, neighbouring farmers’ impact, and village-wide adoption patterns.

Consumer Behaviour pertaining to green inputs was measured through intended buying behaviour as well as actual purchasing using behavioural intention frameworks

adapted from consumer psychology (Ajzen, 1991) [1] and rural adoption model.

Clarity, context relevance, and translation accuracy were validated by a pilot study conducted with 30 farmers. Results indicated adequate internal consistency which facilitated refinement and finalisation of the measurement instrument for the main study.

**Results**

**1. Demographic Profile of Farmers**

From the data collected, 82.33% of respondents were male and the remaining 17.67% female. The largest age group was 41-50 years at 44.33%, which is older than the 26% that falls within a range of 31-40 years. Considering education levels, secondary school completion (38.67%), higher secondary completion (27.33%) and post-secondary or graduate-level education of just 11% tells us much about this area’s region’s values towards education coupled with employment opportunities available locally instead of driving further away to extend one’s schooling beyond high school even if there weren’t prospects close to home. In landholding categories, it was observed that marginal farmers (<2 acres) comprised 42%, small farmers (2-5 acres) made up roughly one third at 33.3% while medium-sized holdings rounded out the rest at 24.67%. Many respondents reported annual incomes below ₹300,000 reflecting these socioeconomic demographics living within the region gap in income skill level talent salary vs worth over longer periods after moving elsewhere would provide. Analysis according attempted summary added where blanked booth explanatory reason afterward needed.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Farmers**

Particulars	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	247	82.33
	Female	53	17.67
Age Group	21–30 years	28	9.33
	31–40 years	78	26
	41–50 years	133	44.33
	51–60 years	61	20.33
Education	No Formal Education	17	5.67
	Secondary	116	38.67
	Higher Secondary	82	27.33
	Diploma/Graduate	33	11
	Others	52	17.33
Landholding Size	Marginal (Below 2 acres)	126	42
	Small (2–5 acres)	100	33.33
	Medium (5–10 acres)	74	24.67
Annual Income	Below ₹3,00,000	189	63
	₹3,00,001 – ₹5,00,000	71	23.67
	Above ₹5,00,000	40	13.33

**2. Characterisation of Statistical Data and Title Relational Matrix**

The basic descriptive analysis as well as Pearson's correlation metric reflect acute associations among the primary constructs. The strongest correlation was trust in

product claims and consumer behaviour (r = 0.62), followed by social influence and consumer behaviour (r = 0.59). All constructs were positively correlated with green consumer behaviour, except for economic constraints which showed a significant negative relationship (r = -0.41).

**Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Coefficients**

Constructs	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Perceived Usefulness	3.81	0.46	1					
Environmental Concern	3.75	0.51	0.35**	1				
Trust in Product	3.92	0.49	0.38**	0.33**	1			
Economic Constraints	3.19	0.54	-0.27**	-0.31**	-0.29**	1		

Social Influence	3.87	0.43	0.41**	0.37**	0.42**	-0.36**	1	
Consumer Behaviour	4.01	0.39	0.53**	0.49**	0.62**	-0.41**	0.59**	1

Note: All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### 3. Reliability and Validity

The assessment of reliability and validity for the present study's constructs was done using Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Discriminant Validity. The results shown in Table 3 indicate that the CR for all constructs exceeded the minimum benchmark of

0.70, demonstrating strong internal consistency. Likewise, all AVE values exceeding 0.50 confirmed good convergent validity. Discriminant validity was confirmed since the square root of AVE for each construct was greater than inter-construct correlations.

Constructs	Composite Reliability	AVE	Discriminant Validity
Perceived Usefulness	0.78	0.63	0.79
Environmental Concern	0.76	0.61	0.78
Trust in Product Claims	0.81	0.65	0.81
Economic Constraints	0.73	0.59	0.76
Social Influence	0.77	0.6	0.77
Consumer Behaviour	0.83	0.68	0.82

The reliability diagnostics confirm that the constructs are statistically valid for further analysis. All constructs displayed reasonable psychometric metrics, and no multicollinearity was present among the variables.

#### 6.4. Impact of Green Marketing Considerations on the Purchasing Behaviour of Farmers

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the impact of different green marketing factors on the consumer behaviour of farmers in Thanjavur. The findings presented in Table 4 demonstrate that perceived usefulness ( $\beta = 0.412$ ), environmental concern ( $\beta = 0.351$ ), trust in product claims ( $\beta = 0.493$ ), and social influence ( $\beta = 0.365$ ) all positively and significantly affect consumer behaviour

within a trust level of significance of 1%. On the other hand, economic constraints ( $\beta = -0.284$ ) exhibited a significantly negative impact.

The model registers a variance of 57.4% in green consumer behaviour, with the chosen predictors explaining almost half the variation observed, indicating a moderately strong model fit with  $R^2=0.574$  correlated to the  $RC^2$  value, which shows adjusted regression coefficient suggesting selected predictive variables were pertinent to farmers' sustainable input purchasing decisions within the set context while requiring further examination or dropping additional markers needs further qualitative research attention.

Table 4: Outcomes of Regression Analysis

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-Value	Significance
Intercept	29.877	14.992	.000 **
Perceived Usefulness	0.412	7.681	.000 **
Environmental Concern	0.351	6.329	.000 **
Trust in Product Claims	0.493	8.273	.000 **
Economic Constraints	-0.284	-5.721	.000 **
Social Influence	0.365	7.014	.000 **
Model Summary	Value		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.574		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.561		
F-Statistic	42.813		.000 **

Note: Significant at the 1% level

The results validate that trust and usefulness are the predominant factors influencing green consumer behaviour of farmers. Since economic limitations hinder adoption, this underscores the need for subsidised support and cost-effectiveness in marketing policy frameworks pertaining to green initiatives.

#### 6.5 SEM Evaluation

A structural equation model (SEM) addressing the impact of green marketing on consumer behaviour was created and assessed using AMOS. The relevant path coefficients alongside fit measures are highlighted in table 5. What is most striking is that fundamental indices were met: Chi-

square = 3.214, GFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.048, RMR = 0.07 along with other criteria suggesting a good model fit.

The SE Model results demonstrate trust in product claims to have the greatest impact ( $\beta = .521$ ) followed by perceived usefulness ( $\beta = .417$ ), social influence ( $\beta = .389$ ), all significant at  $p < .001$  level on consumer behaviour. On the contrary, Economic Constraints had a negative significant effect ( $-\beta = -.263$ ) and Environmental concern maintained moderate positive influence ( $\beta = .328$ ), both significant at  $p < .01$  level.

Table 5: Structural Equation Model – Standardized Coefficients

Path Relationship	Standardized Coefficient	Critical Ratio (CR)	P-Value
Consumer Behaviour ← Perceived Usefulness	0.417	6.582	***
Consumer Behaviour ← Environmental Concern	0.328	5.194	***
Consumer Behaviour ← Trust in Product Claims	0.521	7.906	***

Consumer Behaviour ← Economic Constraints	-0.263	-5.341	***
Consumer Behaviour ← Social Influence	0.389	6.218	***

**Note:** \*\*\* Significant at the 1% level

The model affirms that the attitudinal, economic, and social factors interweave concurrently to shape farmers' green consumer behaviour. The notable trust placed in product claims under rural purchase settings illustrates vividly the significance of assurance and word-of-mouth in rural settings. Moreover, the economic constraints describing the small and marginal farmers of Thanjavur highlight not only the price sensitivity but also underscore an extreme risk-averse attitude common among these farmers.

### Discussion

The findings of the current study provide useful information regarding farmers from Thanjavur and their response to green marketing tactics with respect to sustainable agricultural inputs. The study verifies that perceived usefulness, environmental concern, trust in product claims, social influence, and economic constraints have specific impacts on consumer behaviour.

Trust in product claims strongly influences behaviour as farmers depend greatly on suppliers known to them, peer endorsements, and results from neighbouring farms. This supports the works of Jayakumar and Meenakshi (2019) <sup>[5]</sup> who noted that trust is one of the strongest determinants in rural purchasing decisions where formal verifications are scarce or absent.

Perceived usefulness emerged as a driver towards green consumer behaviour which helped most farmers adopt the use of green inputs due to better crop yield or preservation of soil fertility. These results further reflect the findings by Sathya and Palanisamy (2020) <sup>[10]</sup> where perception of functional benefits was vital in adopting sustainable practices. The concern for the environment has had a moderately strong impact, indicating that farmers are more conscious of the ecological consequences of their decisions. Still, this awareness was not enough to incentivise change without trust and perceived value. This supports the rationale put forth by Sundaram and Murthy (2022) <sup>[12]</sup> wherein Indian farmers show concern for the environment but require adequate information and motivation to enact behavioural change.

The negative impact of economic constraints suggests that cost is still a barrier to adopting green products even when farmers understand their long-term benefits. As noted by Loganathan and Rajendran (2021) <sup>[7]</sup>, a large number of small and marginal farmers during uncertain agricultural seasons tend to opt for short-term low cost over eco-friendly sustainable options. Lastly, social influence constitutes a substantial portion of the behavioural model. Farmers mimic the choices made by their peers and these choices are especially influenced by peer observation if they yield clear benefits, as pointed out by Anbarasan and Deepa (2018) <sup>[2]</sup> who highlighted collective learning along with local demonstration influences on rural adoption trends.

In summary, the findings emphasise that green marketing strategies need to achieve more than just communicating environmental value. They must provide the desired impact and practical value, demonstrate affordability, build reputation through reputable partnerships, and offer competitive pricing. Moreover, effective green marketing in

agriculture has to be contextual, farmer-centric, aligned with grassroots realities, as well as deeply localised.

### Conclusion

This study focused on how attitudes toward green marketing affected the consumer behaviour of farmers in Thanjavur regarding sustainable agricultural inputs. The empirical results confirmed that trust in product claims, perceived usefulness, environmental concern, and social influence all positively and significantly impacted the adoption of green products, whereas economic constraints served as a deterrent.

The findings support the need to adapt green marketing efforts to the socio-economic landscape of rural farming communities. Trust emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that local credibility and experiential evidence matter more than formal advertisements or branding. Perceived usefulness also contributed greatly, showing that farmers need demonstrable benefits regarding sustainable inputs to intellectual engagement with agronomic issues—specifically benefit-to-yield ratios—and soil health over time. Additionally, social networks among farmers who actively participated in shaping behavioural responses illustrated the power of peer learning and field demonstrations.

The negative correlation of economic constraints with the consumption of green products highlights small and marginal farmer price sensitivity vis-à-vis initial investments regardless of acknowledged long-run advantages. Therefore, affordability, accessibility, and discernible impact must be achieved for any effort aimed at marketing sustainable agricultural practices within this demographic to yield tangible results.

### Limitations of the Study

Each contribution from a study comes with its share of limitations, which is precisely the case here. Firstly, the study's focus was limited to a narrow geographical region: the Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu. This regional emphasis means that the conclusions drawn cannot be extrapolated to other regions that differ culturally or climatically. Secondly, as noted in the methodology section, self-reported responses were used as data for gathering information on attitude and behaviour concerning environmental issues. This could lead to exaggerated reporting due to social desirability. Thirdly, while several constructs were incorporated into the present model, many others such as a government subsidy, access to extension services, and seasonal variability were not included, thus limiting the scope of this model.

### Future Research

Forthcoming studies can try including comparative rural regions through broadened geographical scopes across Tamil Nadu and southern India. Moreover, capturing how attitudes shift over time through exposure to green farming could also be analysed through incorporating it within a longitudinal framework. Additionally, researchers may analyse how variables such as farm size, access to irrigation, and types of crops grown affect green marketing in relation

to consumer behaviour. Understanding that relationship might help uncover why little has been done regarding exploring how cooperatives, NGOs, and agricultural institutions influence the sustainable adoption of inputs geared towards enhancing output quality. Studying the impact of policies, training initiatives, and subsidy programmes on behavioural change can inform policy development for fostering ecological farming through green marketing.

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