



ÖZGÜN ARAŞTIRMA / ORIGINAL ARTICLE



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Willingness to Pay for Green Brands in Developing Countries: Turkey Example Gelişmekte Olan Ülkelerde Yeşil Markalar için Ödeme İstekliliği: Türkiye Örneği

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Abstract

Aim: The adoption of green products by consumers in developing countries has a significant impact on shaping economic and environmental policies to achieve sustainable development goals. This study aims to examine consumers' willingness to pay for green branded products and their environmentally conscious consumption behavior in Turkey, a country with a developing economy.

Method: In the research, in-depth interviews were conducted with 70 consumers living in Istanbul and Ankara and the data were evaluated by thematic analysis method using Maxqda software.

Finding: The main factors preventing consumers from purchasing green products are high price, lack of trust, lack of information and low perceived consumer efficacy. Women, highly educated and environmentally conscious individuals show more interest in green products, but price and trust issues negatively affect their purchasing decisions.

Conclusion: Policies such as government incentives, consumer awareness campaigns and transparent certification systems need to be developed to promote green consumption. This study offers important strategic implications for increasing sustainable consumption in developing countries.

Keywords

Sustainable Development, Developing Economies, Environmentally Conscious Consumption, Green Consumption, Willingness to Pay

ETHICAL STATEMENT: Approval was obtained from the Yozgat Bozok University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee (13/44, 17.04.2024)

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Öz

Amaç: Gelişmekte olan ülkelerde sürdürülebilir kalkınma hedeflerine ulaşılması kritik önem taşımaktadır. Bu ülkelerdeki tüketicilerin yeşil ürünleri benimsemesi, ekonomi ve çevre politikalarının şekillendirilmesinde önemli bir etkiye sahiptir. Bu çalışma, gelişmekte olan bir ekonomiye sahip olan Türkiye'de tüketicilerin yeşil markalı ürünler için ödeme istekliliğini ve çevreye duyarlı tüketim davranışlarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem: Araştırmada İstanbul ve Ankara illerinde yaşayan 70 tüketici ile derinlemesine görüşme yapılmış ve veriler Maxqda yazılımı kullanılarak tematik analiz yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir.

Bulgular: Tüketicilerin yeşil ürünleri satın almasını engelleyen başlıca faktörler yüksek fiyat, güven eksikliği, bilgi eksikliği ve düşük algılanan tüketici etkinliği olarak belirlenmiştir. Kadınlar, yüksek eğitimi ve çevreye duyarlı bireyler yeşil ürünlere daha fazla ilgi göstermekte, ancak fiyat ve güven sorunları satın alma kararlarını olumsuz etkilemektedir.

Sonuçlar: Yeşil tüketimi teşvik etmek için devlet teşvikleri, tüketici bilinçlendirme kampanyaları ve şeffaf sertifikasyon sistemleri gibi politikaların geliştirilmesi gerekmektedir. Bu çalışma, gelişmekte olan ülkelerde sürdürülebilir tüketimin artırılması için önemli stratejik çıkarımlar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma, Gelişmekte Olan Ekonomiler, Çevreye Duyarlı Tüketim, Yeşil Tüketim, Ödeme İstekliliği

Introduction

In developing countries, achieving sustainable development goals is of critical importance. The adoption of green products by consumers in these countries has a significant impact on shaping economic and environmental policies. Turkey, with its rapidly developing economy and increasing environmental awareness, is a striking example in this context. How consumers in Turkey think about green branded products and how much money they are willing to spend on these products will significantly affect the country's capacity to achieve its sustainable development goals. Turkey is the 19th largest economy in the world with a GDP of approximately 906 billion dollars. It is a member of the OECD and G20 and is becoming an increasingly important donor of official development assistance. According to the World Bank, Turkey's GDP per capita is around \$10,661 in 2023. This is higher than many developing countries but lower than developed countries (The World Bank, 2024). Turkey is an important emerging economy that attracts attention with its strategic location, young and dynamic population and rich natural resources. The country plays an important role in global trade as a bridge connecting Europe and Asia. Rapid growth in the industrial and service sectors has strengthened Turkey's economic profile and attracted investors from around the world. Moreover, Turkey's young population adds dynamism to the labor market and boosts consumption demand. These factors make Turkey stand out among emerging economies.

Consumers' willingness to pay for green-labeled products in emerging economies is influenced by various factors such as environmental awareness, product functionality and socio-demographic characteristics. For example, consumers' willingness to pay for green products is influenced by their perceptions of the functional aspects of these products, especially in emerging economies of the East (Biswas, 2016). In India, social value is the dominant factor influencing the adoption of sustainable consumption behavior and price sensitivity is high across all consumer segments (Biswas & Roy, 2015). The study conducted in Romania identified the factors predicting young consumers' satisfaction with green products and analyzed public perception of green brand products in the country. Research findings show that a positive attitude towards green products and the level of knowledge consumers have about these products are important determinants of green product satisfaction (Lakatos et. al, 2021). According to a study conducted in Istanbul, environmental awareness, green product features, green promotion activities and green price positively affect consumers' green purchasing behavior (Boztepe, 2012).

In Europe and America, mostly in developed economies, consumers' environmentally sensitive behaviors, attitudes, purchasing behaviors, environmental knowledge and concerns are frequently studied. However, studies to understand consumer behavior in developing economies are still limited (Boztepe, 2012; Saxena, & Khandelwal, 2010). It cannot be said that consumers in undeveloped and developing economies are fully adapted to environmentally sensitive behavior.

The most important factors thought to be effective at this point are education and income among demographic characteristics, environmental awareness, environmental knowledge, difficulty and cost of access to products, perceived effectiveness and government policies among other internal and external factors. Many studies in the literature use survey and quantitative methods to explain consumers' environmentally conscious behavior. While quantitative studies provide generalizable findings on large sample groups, qualitative studies may be more appropriate for understanding more in-depth and subjective factors such as individuals' experiences, motivations and attitudes. Consumers in big cities are willing to pay more for green food than those in small towns (Yu, Gao & Zeng, 2014). In this study, willingness to pay and barriers to purchase for green branded products were investigated through in-depth interviews with 70 participants, 34 female and 36 male, who live in big cities in Turkey and have access to green products. In cases where access to green branded products is not a barrier, consumers' willingness to pay for these products and the barriers to purchasing green products are examined.

Literature Review

Willingness to pay is defined as the maximum price a consumer is willing to pay for a given product or service (Werthenbroch & Skiera, 2002: 228). Willingness to pay for green brands is an important area of research examining consumer behavior towards environmentally friendly products and services. Demographic factors (such as age, gender, education level, income level) play an important role in environmentally conscious consumption behavior. For example, the increase in environmental awareness as education level increases or the relationship between income level and access to environmentally friendly products are considered in this context.

Psychographic factors include individuals' values, lifestyles, interests and personality traits; factors that increase environmental awareness include individuals' environmental values, motivation to contribute to the environment or tendency to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. Other factors such as social factors (family, peer influence and cultural norms), behavioral factors (past consumption experiences and habits), technological factors (accessibility of environmentally friendly products) and economic factors (price sensitivity, cost of sustainable products) also play an important role in shaping environmentally responsible consumption behavior.

Willingness to pay for sustainable products varies across product categories and regions. For example, in China, age and income are important determinants of paying for green food (Yu, Gao & Zeng (2014). Similarly, environmental knowledge and preferences also play a role in tourists' willingness to pay for green hotel certifications (Nelson et al., 2021).

Consumers' willingness to pay for sustainable products can be shaped by message framing and individuals' cost-benefit perceptions. A study found that environmentally friendly message frames increase consumers' willingness to pay by creating a sense of hope, but abstract messages increase cost perception and cause negative emotions (Shah & Yang, 2022). In this context, it is an important issue how the communication strategies used by brands when promoting sustainable products affect consumer behavior.

Consumer awareness of sustainable fashion has also been increasing rapidly in recent years. In a study conducted in Indonesia, it was found that awareness of the sustainable fashion movement and willingness to pay positively affect purchase intention (Wijaya & Paramita, 2021). Similarly, in a study conducted in Pakistan, it was observed that consumers in higher income groups were more willing to pay additional fees for sustainable clothing (Khan et al., 2022). This suggests that income level is one of the determinants of consumer behavior towards sustainable products. Willingness to pay for sustainable agricultural products is also directly related to brand experience. In a study conducted in China, consumers' willingness to pay higher prices for sustainable agricultural products was found to be linked to cognitive and emotional experiences (Suo & Huang, 2023). In this context, sustainable brands developing consumer education and experience-oriented marketing strategies is an important factor that can increase willingness to pay.

Demographic Factors

Gender is a consistent demographic factor influencing environmentally responsible behavior, with research generally showing that women are more likely to exhibit such behaviors (Fisher, Bashyal & Bachman; Roberts, 1996; Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001). Several studies reveal that women exhibit greater environmental responsibility compared to men. A study in Delhi, India found that female students were more likely to participate in environmental education programs than male students (Ganguly, Sinha & Das, 2024). Kumar (2023) reveals that demographic factors play an important role in shaping consumers' attitudes towards green durable products. According to the research findings, male consumers exhibit a more conscious and observant approach towards such products.

Age and education also play important roles in pro-environmental behavior, with older and more educated individuals generally showing higher environmental awareness and engagement in pro-environmental practices (Roberts, 1996; Rajapaksa, Islam & Managi, 2018; Chan, 1996; do Paco, Raposo & Walter, 2009). There are also significant differences between age groups in terms of environmental awareness. A study revealed that the tendency of Generation Y and Generation Z individuals to show environmental responsibility varies with cultural factors. In nature-based tourism, Generations Y and Z show environmental responsibility, and Thai tourists are more aware of environmental issues than Taiwanese and Vietnamese tourists (Lu, Weerapaiboon & Lin, 2023). In addition, married individuals in the middle age group also have a high awareness of green durable goods (Kumar, 2023). However, a study conducted in South Africa found that age, education level and immigrant status are important factors determining environmental attitudes and behaviors (Dlamini, Tesfamichael & Mokhele, 2021).

Higher levels of education positively influence pro-environmental behaviors, highlighting the importance of living environment, social equity and education in sustainable urban planning and climate change mitigation efforts (Rajapaksa et. al, 2018). The impact of income on environmentally responsible behavior is mixed, with variable effects depending on environmental concerns and the local economic context. According to Kumar (2023), it was determined

that individuals with a high level of education and who are sensitive to environmental issues are more likely to adopt the green concept. In the study, it was revealed that employment status is also an important factor affecting consumer attitudes and working individuals show more interest in such products.

The impact of income level on environmental behavior is complex. According to a study conducted in India, it has been observed that there has been a change in attitudes towards green durable products, especially among middle-income individuals, and that they are more likely to consider these products. The study also shows that respondents living in Delhi are more influenced by factors that shape consumer attitudes (Kumar, 2023).

In some cases, higher income may be associated with increased consumption, but this is not always consistent with environmentally responsible behavior. Results from a nationally representative sample in Australia did not support a “typical” demographic profile of the environmentally conscious consumer, but confirmed the utility of demographic variables to describe environmentally conscious consumer behavior. A positive relationship was found between income and consumption (Brooks & Yusuf, 2006). In some cases, those with lower incomes are more likely to exhibit ecological consumer behavior (Roberts, 1996). However, a decrease in income often negatively affects the level of purchase of environmentally sensitive products.

Psychographic and Social Factors

“Environmental knowledge, social impact, effort expectation and perceived expectation have a significant impact on the adoption of environmentally friendly products in developing countries” (Mustafa et al., 2022). Especially in the decision to purchase and use environmentally friendly products, the environmental awareness of individuals, the pressures from their social environment, the expected effort to use these products and the expected benefits of the products play a major role. Again, green consumption behavior shows a strong relationship with consumers’ environmental knowledge, attitudes and social norms. Especially in developed regions, individuals’ attitudes and social pressures regarding green consumption are higher (Xie, Wang & Gong, 2022). In emerging markets, consumers tend to trust eco-friendly products more when they are compatible with the environmental reputation of the country in which they are produced. This “ecological fit” influences purchasing decisions, especially in socially and culturally embedded societies (Tran & Paparoidamis, 2020).

Sekhokoane, Qie & Rau (2017) examined the impact of environmental awareness on green product purchase intention and found that environmental awareness significantly increases green consumption intentions and behaviors. A study conducted among university students revealed the positive effect of environmental awareness on students’ green consumption behaviors. As the level of education increases, green consumption awareness and orientation towards this behavior also increases (Zsóka et al., 2013). Information and awareness obtained through social media strengthens consumers’ attitudes towards green products and increases their purchase intentions. In this context, product knowledge and social norms also have a positive impact on intention (Sun & Wang, 2019).

Environmental awareness acts as a bridge between companies’ sustainability reporting and green consumption behavior and shapes consumers’ environmentally friendly choices. This suggests that companies with environmentally conscious reporting have the potential to encourage green consumption (Rustam, Wang & Zameer, 2020). Regulatory frameworks and growing consumer demand for sustainable products are driving businesses and individuals towards eco-friendly options. Collaboration with research institutions also plays a role in promoting eco-innovation (Triguero et al., 2013). Increased exposure to environmental information through media and social media platforms positively affects the adoption of environmentally friendly products. This exposure improves environmental attitudes and encourages pro-environmental behaviors (Delcea et al., 2019).

Environmentally conscious individuals are more likely to adopt green consumption behavior. Research supports the direct relationship between environmental responsibility and consumers’ positive attitudes towards environmental issues and green consumption (Long & Cai, 2022). Values such as environmental awareness and self-transcendence support positive attitudes towards green products and encourage purchasing behavior. In addition, as an individual’s level of environmental concern increases, the tendency to purchase green products also increases (Sankaranarayanan & Mayekar, 2019). Green advertisements and brand trust positively affect consumers’ intention to prefer green products. In the study conducted by Amallia et al. (2021) in Indonesia, it was stated that supporting consumer attitudes with green advertisements leads to an increase in the intention to purchase green products.

Personal responsibility, internal locus of control, and pro-environmental attitudes are strongly associated with intention to purchase environmentally friendly products. These personality factors appear to be stable across different income levels in emerging markets (He et al., 2019).

While consumers are willing to pay a premium for environmentally friendly products, they tend to prefer those that are readily available. High prices and limited accessibility are often barriers to adoption (Bhate & Lawler, 1997).

Another barrier is perceived product efficacy and perceived consumer efficacy. This efficacy belief comes from both consumers' lack of belief that environmentally friendly products actually offer environmental benefits and their belief that consuming these products will not contribute to the environment (Emekci, 2019).

Methodology

In this study, qualitative research method was used and face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with participants selected by maximum variation sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling strategy in which the researcher consciously selects individuals or situations with certain characteristics. This method is generally used in qualitative research and is especially preferred when in-depth information is desired. Purposive sampling is used to better understand or explore a particular phenomenon, rather than to make sweeping generalizations. Maximum variation sampling is a purposive sampling method in which participants with different characteristics are deliberately selected to represent a wide range of views and experiences (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2014).

Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and the interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. Before starting the research, the participants signed a voluntary participant form in accordance with the ethical procedures of the research and personal information was not included in the form¹. Participants were named by giving a code (For example: Woman, Dr. 45 years). The participants were asked semi-structured interview form questions. Since the questions were semi-structured, some questions were elaborated during the interview. The volunteers participating in the research were selected from big cities and living areas where these products are sold, assuming that there is access to green branded products. Care was taken to distribute the participants demographically balanced. The demographic characteristics of the participants are as follows (See Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

		Frequency	%
Sex	Male	36	51.4
	Female	34	48.6
Age	18-35	14	20
	36-44	24	34.3
	45-54	25	35.7
	55 and over	7	10
Education	High School	8	11.4
	Bachelor's degree	38	54.3
	Master's degree	14	20
	Ph. D.	10	14.3
Income	Low	13	18.6
	Middle	32	45.7
	High	18	25.7
	Very High	7	10

According to the research findings, first of all, the gender distribution is quite balanced, with 51.4% of male and 48.6% of female participants. This shows that the research is based on a balanced sample in terms of gender and that the findings can be interpreted to cover both genders. When the age distribution is analyzed, the largest group of participants is between the ages of 45-54 with 35.7%. This is followed by the 36-44 age group with 34.3%. When these two groups are considered together, it is seen that the research largely focuses on individuals in the middle age group. The younger age group, 18-35 years old, is represented by 20% and 55 years old and above by 10%. This indicates that the research findings are more likely to reflect the tendencies and behaviors of individuals in the middle age group. In terms of education level, it is noteworthy that the majority of the participants are individuals with higher education. 54.3% of the respondents are bachelor's degree graduates, while the total rate of master's (20%) and doctorate (14.3%) graduates reaches 34.3%. On the other hand, the proportion of high school graduates remained low at 11.4%. This finding indicates that the research is based on the views of individuals with higher education levels.

In terms of income level, the majority of the respondents belong to the middle income group (45.7%). In addition, the proportion of individuals in the high income group was 25.7% and the proportion of those in the very high income group was 10%. Participants belonging to the low income group are represented by 18.6%. This shows that

¹Ethics committee reports were obtained from the Ethics Commission of Yozgat Bozok University.

the findings of the research mainly reflect the perspective of individuals with middle and high income levels. In general, the sample of the study consists of highly educated and mostly middle-income individuals concentrated in the middle age group. Although the gender distribution is balanced, the underrepresentation of participants from lower education and income levels constitutes a limitation in terms of the generalizability of the findings.

In this research, in-depth interviews were conducted to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the barriers to people buying green products in Turkey when access to green products is not limited?

RQ2: What is the impact of demographic factors on people's purchase of green products in Turkey?

RQ3: Which factors other than demographic factors affect individuals' environmentally conscious behavior in Turkey?

Data Analysis

Maxqda program was used for data analysis in the study. Maxqda is a powerful analysis software that is widely used in qualitative data analysis and facilitates processes such as data coding, categorization and thematic organization (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the study, the data were systematically coded, classified and analyzed according to themes through Maxqda. In the data analysis process, firstly, the data were read carefully to familiarize with the participants' discourses and to gain a holistic understanding of the data. Then, using Maxqda's coding features, the data were divided into meaningful units and codes that could be related to the research questions were extracted. Common themes were identified by considering the relationships between the codes and the thematic framework was structured on Maxqda. Afterwards, the integrity and scope of the themes were re-evaluated and necessary arrangements were made on the thematic structure. In the final stage, each theme was defined in detail, supported by participant statements and the analysis process was completed.

Conclusion and Discussion

Promoting sustainable consumption habits in developing economies is of great importance from both environmental and economic perspectives. Consumer behavior towards environmentally friendly products in these countries is often shaped by various factors such as economic conditions, social values and demographic factors. Studies by Biswas (2016) and Biswas & Roy (2015) have shown that consumers' attitudes towards green products in emerging economies of the East are influenced by social values and price sensitivity, especially their perceptions of the functionality of products. This is more pronounced in countries such as Turkey, where the high cost of green products is a barrier for many consumers.

Trust also plays a critical role in the adoption of green products in developing economies. Tran & Pappas (2020) emphasize that consumers have more trust in products from countries with a high environmental reputation and this ecological fit increases green consumption behaviors. On the other hand, Zsóka et al. (2013) in Hungary demonstrated the positive impact of environmental education and awareness on young consumers and showed that raising the level of education can encourage green consumption habits. Finally, Nguyen et al. (2017) investigated the main barriers affecting green product purchasing behavior in developing countries and found that factors such as high price, low product availability and low credibility of ecological labels hinder green consumption. In this framework, understanding the economic and social factors shaping consumer perceptions to increase the consumption of environmentally friendly products in developing economies is critical to achieving sustainable development goals. In this context, the questions of this research are answered as follows:

RQ1: What are the barriers to people buying green products in Turkey where access to green products is not limited?

Even in cases where there is access to green products, one of the biggest barriers to buying green products in Turkey is the high price of these products. This finding supports the work of Biswas and Roy (2015), which shows that it is closely related to consumers' perceptions of the functional aspects of products and their high price sensitivity in developing economies. Since these products are considered more expensive than standard products, consumers do not want to strain their budgets. There is also a lack of trust among consumers about how much these products really contribute to the environment. Distrust of "eco," "organic" or "environmentally friendly" labels is another barrier that negatively affects the willingness to purchase these products. Consumers are also hesitant to purchase eco-friendly products because they do not have enough information about their long-term benefits. In addition, consumers' perceived effectiveness beliefs were found to be low. In other words, they do not have positive beliefs about the contribution of consuming green products to the environment.

Within the scope of this research question, the answers given by participants with different demographic characteristics are as follows:

- Price Concern: *"Green products are really expensive. When there is a normal product that does the same job, it is difficult for me to pay twice as much just because it is more environmentally friendly. It is beyond my budget."* (Age: 34, middle income, civil servant, Istanbul).

- Lack of Trust: *"I am not sure that every product that says 'eco' or 'organic' is really good for the environment. How much can we trust these labels? Is it just a marketing strategy or are they really different?"* (Age: 28, high income, manager, Ankara).

- Lack of Knowledge: *"I don't know enough about the benefits of green products. Are they really better than other products? How do they contribute in the long run? I need more information on these issues."* (Age: 44, low income, cashier, Istanbul).

- Impact Belief: *"How much contribution would it make to the environment for me to use green products on my own? I feel like nothing much will change. So I continue to buy normal products."* (Age: 38, middle income, engineer, Ankara).

There is a significant lack of trust among participants regarding the reliability of labels such as 'eco,' 'organic,' or 'environmentally friendly.' Consumers are sceptical that these labels may merely be a marketing strategy. This lack of trust negatively affects purchasing intent. Tran and Papatoidamis (2020) emphasise that consumers trust products from countries with high environmental reputations more and that this 'ecological alignment' increases green consumption. This highlights the importance of transparent certification systems to increase trust.

Consumers have indicated that they lack sufficient information about the long-term benefits and environmental contributions of green products. This lack of information leads to indecision when making purchasing decisions. Furthermore, participants' perceived consumer efficacy beliefs are low. That is, they do not hold positive beliefs that individual consumption of green products will make a significant contribution to solving environmental problems. This finding aligns with Emekci's (2019) study, which identifies disbelief in the effectiveness of environmentally friendly products as an obstacle.

RQ2: What is the impact of demographic factors on people's purchase of green products in Turkey?

Demographic factors play an important role in green product purchasing behavior. According to research findings, women tend to be more willing to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors than men. In addition, older and more educated individuals are more sensitive in terms of environmental awareness and are more likely to prefer environmentally friendly products. Although individuals with higher income levels have more access to these products, high prices prevent individuals with lower income levels from purchasing these products.

Some of the answers given by participants with different demographic characteristics are as follows:

-Female: *"I try to buy green branded products from time to time. But there is no product that I buy regularly, sometimes I buy them when I think of them or when I see them on the shelves."* (Female, Age: 37, middle income, academician, Ankara).

- Male: *"I can't say that I pay much attention to the green branded products. I don't know, if I am persuaded, I may start buying them, but I consume organic ones for my health, except that they are harmful to the environment."* (Male, Age: 29, middle income, market manager, Istanbul).

- Female: *"I buy green brands when I see them at affordable prices. I buy them for my health and the future of the environment, but there is no such awareness in the society. I am not sure how much good I can do on my own. I try to be sensitive to the environment."* (Female, Age: 48, high income, doctor, Ankara).

- Male: *"I don't know much about green branded products. I don't have a brand that I buy regularly. In terms of my economy, I prefer affordable products more."* (Male, Age: 31, low income, market employee, Ankara).

Research findings, consistent with the general trend in the literature, reveal that women show greater interest in environmentally friendly behaviour than men. This finding parallels studies such as Fisher et al. (2012) and Laroche et al. (2001), which indicate that women demonstrate greater environmental responsibility. Furthermore, it has been observed that highly educated individuals are more environmentally conscious and tend to prefer green products. Studies such as Rajapaksa et al. (2018), which indicate that this increase in education level positively affects pro-environmental behaviour, support this result. Despite their high level of environmental awareness, these highly educated individuals face issues such as high prices and lack of trust.

RQ3: Which factors other than demographic factors affect the environmentally conscious behavior of individuals in Turkey?

Apart from demographic factors, environmental awareness, social pressure, level of knowledge about environmentally friendly products and government policies are the main factors affecting individuals' environmentally conscious behavior. Individuals with high environmental awareness are more likely to prefer environmentally friendly products. In addition, support from the social environment and information about environmentally friendly products

are effective in the preference of these products. Government policies and incentives are among other important factors that positively affect individuals' environmentally friendly behavior.

Apart from demographic factors, comments on other factors affecting the participants are as follows:

-Social Environment and Pressure: *"The fact that people around me are sensitive to the environment also affects me. If some of my family and friends are conscious about this issue, I pay more attention. Their behavior affects me positively."* (Male, Age: 38, high income, academician, Ankara).

- Government Policies and Incentives: *"It is very important for the state to encourage environmentally friendly products. Things like tax discounts and campaigns motivate us more. Thanks to such incentives, green products become more attractive."* (Female, Age: 47, middle income, teacher, Istanbul).

-Knowledge and Awareness: *"I do not have enough information about environmentally friendly products. I don't know which products are really environmentally friendly and how they are produced. If I have more information on these issues, I can make more informed choices."* (Male, Age: 31, low income, market employee, Ankara).

In addition to demographic factors, factors such as environmental awareness levels, social pressure, and government policies also influence environmentally conscious consumption behaviour.

Environmental Awareness and Knowledge: Individuals with high environmental awareness are more likely to prefer green products. Consumers' level of environmental knowledge and awareness are important determinants that increase their purchase intentions. Zsóka et al. (2013) have shown that environmental education and awareness encourage green consumption habits.

Social Environment and Pressure: Support and pressure from the social environment influence the preference for environmentally friendly products. Mustafa et al. (2022) also noted that environmental impact and social pressure play a major role in the adoption of green products in developing countries.

Government Policies and Incentives: Participants emphasised that individual efforts are insufficient and that government incentives and policies play a critical role in promoting green consumption. Government incentives such as tax breaks and campaigns make green products more attractive.

Based on this analysis, it can be said that the participants tend to support environmentally friendly products, but they cannot tend to consume these products due to economic, knowledge, lack of perceived effectiveness beliefs and trust barriers. In addition, the participants emphasize that individual efforts are not sufficient in solving environmental problems and that government policies and social awareness should be strengthened. The results of the analysis indicate that government policies and consumer trends should be organized in a way to increase the accessibility and reliability of environmentally friendly products. This, in turn, can contribute to environmental sustainability by increasing the demand for environmentally friendly products.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis Results

Thema	Output	Recommendation
Environmental Sensitivity and Awareness Level	There is a general awareness of environmentally friendly products, but a lack of knowledge about their benefits and environmental impacts.	Media and public education campaigns can be used to increase knowledge about environmentally friendly products.
Economic Barriers	Environmentally friendly products are not affordable for most respondents due to their prices. Even participants with relatively high income levels hesitate to purchase these products.	Tax reductions or subsidies can be provided by the government to reduce the cost of environmentally friendly products.
Government Policies and Need for Incentives	Participants think that environmentally friendly consumption should not be limited to individual efforts and that the state should promote environmentally friendly products.	The state can initiate incentive programs for producers, and can adjust environmentally friendly policies to include responsibilities for companies.
Trust Issue	Respondents doubt the reliability of the labeling or certification of green products, which reduces trust in green products.	A transparent and regular audit mechanism can be established to build confidence in the certification of environmentally friendly products.
Individual Efforts and Social Awareness	Participants are aware that individual efforts such as plastic sorting are not enough for environmental protection. A wider social awareness is needed to solve environmental problems.	Environmental education curricula should be included in schools and environmental awareness should be raised by emphasizing the importance of individual efforts through social campaigns.
Factors Affecting Willingness to Pay	Respondents' willingness to pay for environmentally friendly products is limited primarily due to the high prices of these products. Although some respondents are willing to switch to environmentally friendly products considering the savings they will provide in the long run, the high initial cost prevents them from doing so.	Awareness should be raised about the long-term savings and environmental benefits of environmentally friendly products. In addition, favorable pricing policies should be developed to increase willingness to pay.

Developing countries, which account for a large proportion of the world's population, play a critical role in achieving the goal of a sustainable, healthy green economy and ecosystem protection. Unless the majority of the population in these countries act responsibly, this dream cannot be realized (Mustafa et al., 2022:2). This research provides important findings to understand consumers' willingness to pay for green branded products in Turkey. Consumer behavior is critical to achieving sustainable development goals in developing countries, and in the case of Turkey, the influence of environmental awareness and economic factors on these behaviors is clearly observed. Although respondents intend to choose green products, high prices, lack of information, low perceived efficacy beliefs and trust issues stand out as significant barriers to their adoption. These findings suggest that economic constraints and lack of trust in environmentally friendly products may limit sustainable consumption behaviors in developing countries. Moreover, demographic characteristics, especially age, gender and education level, shape consumers' attitudes towards green products. In this context, the fact that individuals with higher education levels are more inclined towards environmentally friendly products suggests that increasing the level of education may have positive effects on environmentally friendly consumption. In developing economies, individuals' willingness to pay for environmentally friendly products is affected by various economic, social and cultural factors. This study has tried to clarify this issue through the case of Turkey and the following general conclusions have been reached.

- Understanding and promoting consumer behavior towards green products in emerging economies plays a critical role in promoting sustainable consumption habits. In this context, future research in Turkey should examine the demand for green products among consumers with different demographic characteristics in more detail. Given the diversity of consumers in Turkey, comprehensive research examining attitudes towards green products across different income levels, age groups and regional characteristics would allow for more specific trends to be identified across consumer segments. Increasing demographic diversity can contribute to a better understanding of the factors influencing the demand for green products and improve their consumer appeal.

- However, the lack of trust, which stands out as one of the most important barriers to the adoption of green products, necessitates studies on the impact of certification and labeling systems on consumer perception. When consumers are uncertain about the reliability of environmentally friendly products, they hesitate to prefer these products. Future research can contribute to the development of policy recommendations to increase trust in green products by evaluating the impact of certification mechanisms and transparent labeling practices on consumer behavior to overcome the trust problem.

- The impact of economic incentives on demand for green products is also an important research topic. For consumers in developing countries, price sensitivity and economic constraints are factors that limit the affordability of green products. At this point, studies on how economic incentives such as government support and subsidies affect the willingness to pay for green products can contribute to developing policy recommendations that have the potential to encourage sustainable consumption. In this way, government policies can play a role in supporting environmentally friendly consumption habits by reducing economic barriers.

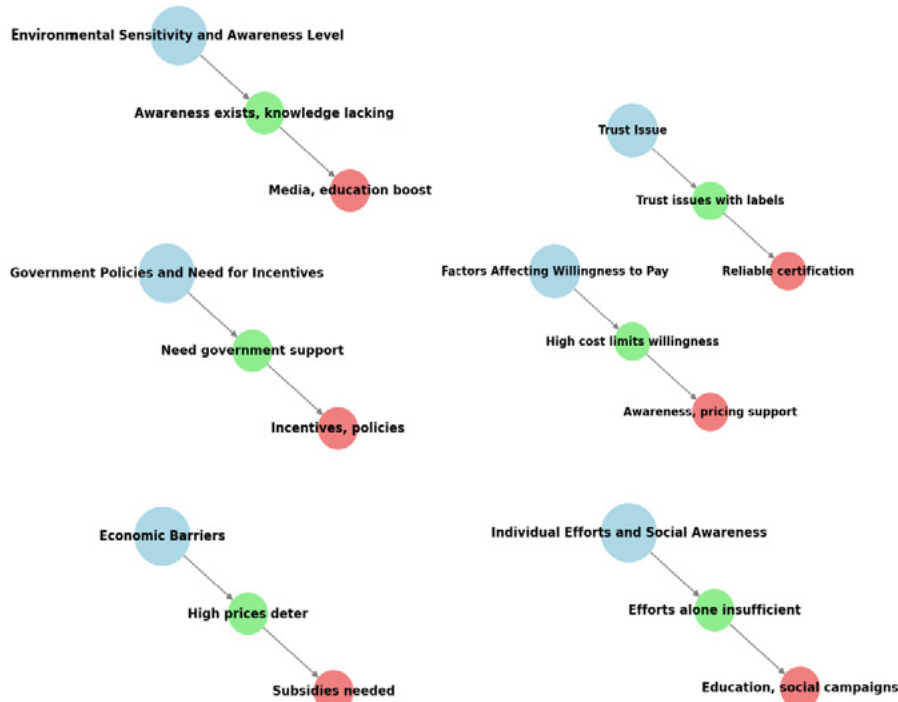


Figure 1: Thematic Visualization with Keywords (This diagram was created by the author)

- The role of environmental education is another important factor that can have long-term effects in promoting sustainable consumption habits. Raising environmental awareness among young generations may lead them to adopt more sustainable consumption habits in the following years. Expanding research on the effects of environmental education on young people may allow for the identification of strategies that can be integrated into the education system. In this way, the introduction of environmentally conscious consumption habits from an early age can lead to greater adoption of green products across society.

- Finally, the impact of environmental awareness on the demand for green products is another important issue to consider, especially in developing countries. Lack of information about the long-term benefits of environmentally friendly products may limit individuals' willingness to pay for these products. Increasing the awareness of individuals in developing countries about environmental problems and the importance of products in solving these problems may encourage the preference of environmentally friendly products. In this context, information campaigns and training programs that emphasize the benefits of environmentally friendly products will positively affect consumer behavior and support the achievement of sustainable development goals.

As a result, further research in emerging economies will contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors affecting consumer behavior towards green products and enable the development of strategies to promote sustainable consumption habits. Demographic diversity, trust and certification mechanisms, economic incentives, environmental education and environmental awareness stand out as critical factors that will enable green products to be adopted by a wider consumer base in emerging economies. By increasing the accessibility of environmentally friendly products and shaping consumer perceptions, efforts to address these factors can support the spread of sustainable consumption habits across society.

This study provides important findings for understanding Turkish consumers' willingness to pay for environmentally friendly brands. However, future research needs to test these findings in a broader context and analyze them in depth. First, mixed studies combining quantitative and qualitative methods can be conducted to better understand the attitudes and willingness to pay of different socio-economic groups towards eco-friendly products. Such studies would more comprehensively address the green consumption habits of low-income groups in particular and the barriers in this regard. In addition, the relationship between the pricing of green products and consumer perceptions needs to be examined in more detail. Experimental research is recommended to determine the impact of price sensitivity on willingness to pay. In particular, research examining the effects of government incentives, tax breaks and subsidies for green products on consumer behavior can be instructive for policymakers.

Statements

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Özet

Gelişmekte olan ülkelerde sürdürülebilir kalkınma hedeflerine ulaşmak için tüketicilerin yeşil ürünleri benimsemesi büyük önem taşımaktadır. Yeşil ürünlerin tüketiciler tarafından kabul görmesi, ekonomik ve çevresel politikaların şekillenmesinde belirleyici bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu çalışma, gelişmekte olan bir ekonomi olan Türkiye örneğinde, tüketicilerin yeşil markalı ürünlere yönelik ödeme istekliliğini ve çevreye duyarlı tüketim davranışlarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Araştırmada, İstanbul ve Ankara'da yaşayan 70 tüketici ile derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiş ve veriler tematik analiz yöntemi kullanılarak Maxqda yazılımı ile analiz edilmiştir. Katılımcılar, yeşil ürünleri satın alma motivasyonları, bu ürünlere ilişkin güven ve farkındalık düzeyleri ile çevreye duyarlı tüketim alışkanlıkları hakkında görüş bildirmiştir. Araştırma, yeşil ürünlere yönelik tutumları belirleyen demografik faktörleri ve bu ürünlerin benimsenmesini engelleyen bariyerleri anlamayı hedeflemektedir.

Araştırma bulguları, tüketicilerin yeşil ürünleri satın alma konusunda belirli zorluklar yaşadığını göstermektedir. Bu zorluklar şu başlıklar altında toplanmıştır:

Yüksek Fiyat Algısı: Yeşil ürünlerin fiyatlarının geleneksel ürünlere kıyasla yüksek olması, tüketicilerin bu ürünleri satın almasını zorlaştırmaktadır. Orta ve düşük gelir grubundaki bireyler, ekonomik sebeplerle bu ürünlere yönelmekte zorlanmaktadır.

Güven Eksikliği: Katılımcılar, eko, organik veya çevre dostu etiketlerinin güvenilirliği konusunda şüphe duymaktadır. Sertifikasyon sistemlerine duyulan güvenin düşük olması, tüketicilerin bu ürünleri satın alma eğilimini azaltmaktadır.

Bilgi Eksikliği: Tüketicilerin büyük bir kısmı, yeşil ürünlerin uzun vadeli çevresel ve sağlık faydaları hakkında yeterli bilgiye sahip olmadıklarını ifade etmiştir.

Algılanan Tüketici Etkinliği: Çoğu katılımcı, bireysel olarak yeşil ürünleri satın almanın çevresel etkiler üzerinde önemli bir değişim yaratmayacağına inanmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, araştırmada belirlenen bazı demografik eğilimler şunlardır:

Kadın tüketiciler, erkeklere kıyasla çevreye duyarlı tüketim konusunda daha fazla ilgilidir. Daha yüksek eğitim seviyesine sahip bireyler, yeşil ürünlere yönelik daha bilinçli bir tutum sergilemektedir. Çevresel farkındalığı yüksek bireyler, yeşil ürünleri satın almaya daha yatkın olmakla birlikte, yüksek fiyatlar ve güven eksikliği bu eğilimi sınırlamaktadır. Araştırma, gelişmekte olan ülkelerde yeşil ürünlerin benimsenmesini teşvik etmek için çeşitli politika önerileri sunmaktadır. Bu kapsamda önerilen başlıca stratejiler şunlardır:

Hükümet Teşvikleri: Çevre dostu ürünlerin maliyetini düşürmek için vergi indirimleri ve sübvansiyonlar sağlanmalıdır. Ayrıca, yeşil ürünlerin güvenilirliğini artırmak amacıyla şeffaf sertifikasyon sistemleri oluşturulmalıdır.

Tüketici Bilinçlendirme Kampanyaları: Yeşil ürünlerin faydaları hakkında medya ve kamuoyu bilgilendirme çalışmaları yapılmalıdır.

Şirket Politikaları: Markalar, çevresel sorumluluklarını vurgulayan etkili pazarlama stratejileri geliştirerek tüketici güvenini artırmalıdır.