

# MARKETING ECOLABELLED BUILDING MATERIALS: ADDRESSING PERCEPTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND SOLUTIONS IN B2B END-BUYER DYNAMICS

**Sachin Gupte, Dr. Tejashree Deshmukh**

IGBC AP | GEM CP | CII CPCF  
Research Scholar, PTVA's Institute of Management

Guide  
Director, PTVA's Institute of Management

## Abstract

*Ecolabelled certification for materials certifies a product to meet specified environmental standards, is the most critical elements for sustainability. The paper examines marketing dynamics in the Ecolabelled building material, with regard to perception, challenges, and solutions in B2B transactions and decision-making of the end-buyer. In this study, the research method used is secondary research, wherein existing literature and industry reports with case studies have been analysed. Major topics in discussion are on definitions and types of ecolabels, marketing strategy, stakeholder perception, difficulties facing marketers, and recommended solution areas. It points to awareness campaigns as key initiative for implementation in combination with cooperation among industry groups, in tandem with marketing aimed at a more appropriate target audience.*

**Keywords:** Ecolabels, Sustainable Building Materials, Marketing Strategies, B2B Transactions, End-Buyer Perceptions, Environmental Benefits, Cost Sensitivity, Supply Chain Issues, Industry Collaboration, Educational Initiatives.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ecolabelled products play a significant role in the building material industry in achieving sustainability. Ecolabels are given to products ensuring that they satisfy certain environmental conditions, thus bringing down the carbon footprint of any construction activity (Chan, Qian, & Lam, 2009). The growing sense of environmental consciousness and the need for sustainability has increased demand for Ecolabelled building materials. This paper will look into the dynamics of marketing around Ecolabelled building materials, especially focusing on perceptions, challenges, and solutions in B2B transactions and end-buyer decision-making. The methodology adopted in this study is secondary research, which deals with the analysis of literature available, industry reports, and case studies.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF ECOLABELLED PRODUCTS AND BUILDING MATERIALS

### 2.1 Definition of Ecolabels

Global Ecolabelling Network defines Ecolabelling as ~ “Ecolabelling is a voluntary method of environmental performance certification and labelling that is practised around the world. An ecolabel identifies products or services proven to be environmentally preferable within a specific category.”

Ecolabels are certifications given to products that meet certain environmental criteria, indicating their sustainability. These labels are crucial in the construction industry as they help identify materials that are environmentally friendly and promote sustainable building practices (Xing, Hewitt, & Griffiths, 2011).

There are three main types of ecolabels:

ISO 14024 features the principles and procedures for selecting product categories, product-environmental criteria, product-function characteristics and for assessing and demonstrating compliance.

ISO has developed a categorisation of voluntary labels into three types are clearly mentioned in the ISO 14020 series of standards.-

-Type I: Voluntary, multiple-criteria based, third-party program that awards a license authorising the use of environmental labels on products (e.g., Green Pro, Energy Star, EU Ecolabel).

- Type II: Self-declared environmental claims made by manufacturers, importers, or distributors (e.g., recyclable or biodegradable labels).

- Type III: Voluntary programs that provide quantified environmental data based on life cycle assessments (e.g., Environmental Product Declarations).

## 2.2 Examples of Ecolabelled Materials

Key examples of Ecolabelled building materials include:

1. **Green Cement** Green cement is low-carbon-emitting cement. It has been created with the intent to minimise the destructive impact that classical cement production generates over the environment. Green cement will use wastes that include fly ash, slag, and silica fume; their inclusion does not only lower the carbon emission that comes from making it but will also strengthen it and increase durability. (Papadopoulos, 2005).
2. **Low VOC Paints.** These paints emit fewer volatile organic compounds. Such paint is prepared to have a lower concentration of airborne toxins so that the indoor air quality is high with minimal adverse health effects on the occupants. Low VOC paints come in a range of colours and finishes, offering developers and homeowners much scope in terms of variety (Nguyen & Altan 2011).
3. **Recycled Materials:** Materials made from recycled content, such as recycled steel, plastic, and glass. Using recycled materials in construction helps conserve natural resources, reduce waste, and lower the environmental footprint of building projects. Examples include recycled concrete aggregate, reclaimed wood, and recycled metal roofing (Sandanayake, Zhang, Setunge, & Thilakaratne 2019).
4. **Energy-Efficient Insulation:** Energy-efficient Insulation: Materials that specifically satisfy energy efficiency criteria in buildings. It keeps the indoor temperature at suitable levels, therefore reducing heat and cooling losses, which leads to the saving of energy bills. Rigid foam insulation from recycled material is another example of this insulation. (Rauf & Crawford 2015).

## 2.3 Benefits

The use of Ecolabelled materials offers several benefits:

1. **Environmental:** Lesser carbon footprint and lesser degradation of the environment. When choosing Ecolabelled products, builders are capable of reducing the ecological impacts associated with the construction projects by maintaining the preservation of natural ecosystems as well as greenhouse gas emissions reductions. (Johnstone & Halliday 2016).
2. **Economic:** There is a possibility of long-term savings in costs with the improved efficiency in energy consumption. While Ecolabelled materials may be expensive upfront, they often lead to huge long-term savings as a result of reduced energy use, lower maintenance costs, and increased property value. (Ahn, Kwon, & Pearce, 2009).
3. **Social:** Health and wellbeing are assured for occupants through the usage of non-toxic material. Ecolabeled products are associated with lower levels of dangerous chemicals. The indoor air quality is likely to be enhanced with a decreased possibility of health concerns like respiratory conditions and allergic reactions. The usage of sustainable materials would make a house more comfortable and pleasing (Kang & Kim 2021).

## 3. PERCEPTIONS OF B2B STAKEHOLDERS AND END-BUYERS

Perception is a process where the individual organises sensory inputs along with relevant information to generate an internal image of his surroundings (Kenyon & Sen 2015). The cognitive process impacts how stakeholders perceive choices, which may be the decision-making or the actual behavior about various options.

It is through perception in the construction industry that sustainable practices and materials will be adopted. The likelihood of their use depends on the products being of high quality, cost-effective, and reliability. Perceptions of being technically complex and of having a high initial cost, are some factors that will deter them from their use.

B2B stakeholders, such as builders, contractors tend to evaluate Ecolabelled products on the basis of,

1. **Performance :** Performance comprises of meeting the laid technical and output or delivery performance. B2B buyers are particular about the product the specifications and at what level they perform. A proper demonstration of the Ecolabelled product meeting the technical parameters and performance, will help build trust and encourage adoption. (Chan et al., 2009).

2. Price : Price in most of the cases is a decisive factor for procuring a product, especially in an B2B environment, customers take cognisance of the long term advantages wherein they get not only the initial cost saving but also a recurring saving over a period of time. Harping the long term benefits can make the proposition attractive to customer in the long term. (Xing et al., 2011). One feels that sustainable materials are expensive. The end-buyer would be more concerned about possible higher costs when taking an Ecolabelled product. Hence, by marketing and education, those misperceptions can be washed away to change the perception and encourage adoption (Johnstone & Halliday, 2016).

3. Environmental Benefits: Based on sustainability credentials and environmental implications of the materials. B2B stakeholders are increasingly moving toward sustainability in projects, so the environmental benefits of Ecolabelled products are becoming an important consideration in the decision-making process for these stakeholders (Rauf & Crawford, 2015).

4. Lack of availability : Product availability issue deters the stakeholders from adopting the product. If the Ecolabelled products are not available on time , this may increase the project cost overruns, the buyers will immediately shift to generic products. Also, if the choice of products and attributes are limited they may also look out for regular options. Thus, increasing the reach and availability alongwith multiple options, can help overcome the challenge and enhance the adoption of Ecolabelled products. (Darko et al., 2017).

Proper marketing strategies should focus on improving the perceptions related to the above, backed with complimenting education campaigns covering the benefits of the Ecolabelled products, to increase the adoption. (Luthra, Kumar, & Garg, 2015).

## 5. OVERCOMING PERCEPTION BARRIERS

Right marketing strategies can effectively address misconceptions about the cost and value of Ecolabelled products and help in overcoming the perceptions, which may act as barriers to adoption.

1. Highlighting Long-Term Savings: A proper campaign emphasising the long term benefits and substantiating with a proper content can help the potential stakeholders see beyond the initial costs and will find value in investing sustainable products. (Ahn et al., 2009).

2. Performance Demonstration: Performance is the key for adoption any services and product. Demonstrating key attributes such as durability, efficiency, and effectiveness may dispel doubts and increase confidence in their use (Papadopoulos, 2005).

## 6. CHALLENGES IN MARKETING ECOLABELLED BUILDING MATERIALS

Inspite of the increase in overall reach of sustainable practices, marketing and adoption of Ecolabelled products still is challenging. Understanding the challenges, is a vital to develop proper strategies for aggressive promotion of Ecolabelled products.

1. Cost Sensitivity: The first challenge is that Ecolabelled products are perceived to be expensive, if we consider only on initial cost basis. However, this can be easily overcome by emphasising the long-term cost savings and allied benefits (Hydes & Creech, 2000). Organisations should develop content in a manner that focuses on financial benefits of using Ecolabeled materials, including lower energy charges, maintenance costs, and tax rebates. They should also include case studies and testimonials of existing customers on why they are satisfied using Ecolabeled products.

2. Awareness Gaps: There is a significant lack of awareness about ecolabels, particularly in emerging markets or smaller businesses. Effective awareness campaigns and educational initiatives are important to bridge this gap (Kang & Kim, 2021). For promoting the benefits of Ecolabelled products , engaging with industry organisations, certification bodies and learning institutions to create information-rich content will be an effective strategy. Training and awareness workshops, webinars and sessions can also be used to increase awareness and appreciation of stakeholders.

3. Product Availability : Product non availability and delay in logistics of Ecolabelled products can be problematic. Steady supply and proper addressing of logistical issues are highly critical for the adoption of these materials on a wider scale (Sandanayake et al., 2019). The marketer should engage with suppliers and distributors to efficiently implement the supply chain so that the availability of Ecolabelled products is sorted out, through local and regional suppliers, This would help in overcoming supply chain disruption and improve overall availability of sustainable materials.

4. Resistance to Change: Stakeholders resist change due to familiarity bias or reluctance to shift from traditional materials. The demonstration of benefits along with clear evidence of the performance of Ecolabelled materials will help overcome such resistance (Darko et al., 2017). Marketers can utilise targeted messaging to address specific concerns and highlight the advantages of sustainable materials. Showing the success of Ecolabelled products in various projects and providing concrete examples of their benefits can help marketers build trust and encourage stakeholders to adopt sustainable practices.

## 7. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ecolabelled marketing needs a different and focussed approach over the regular products, as they are challenging and need multi-pronged approach. The following approaches are suggested which are aimed to streamline the adoption by creating a positive perception about these products.

1. Awareness Programs and Stimulation Activity : Organising engaging and awareness creation workshops, seminars, and other formats of knowledge programs will raise the level of awareness on the advantages of Ecolabelled materials. This is because it is at such interactive events not just promotes learning but also helps them make informed decision through the lens of performance, cost, and environmental impacts of the sustainable building materials and make a choice. Other collaterals such as brochures, videos, and online courses to be created and disseminated for sensitisation and enlightenment of the products.

2. Cost Incentives and Financing Models: Green finance or subsidies can make Ecolabeled materials more attractive as well as viable in the market from the buyers' point of view. For example, government agencies and associations in the industrial sector can give incentives for people adopting sustainable materials including rebates, low-interest loans and tax credits. Furthermore, new financing mechanisms like green bonds or performance-based contracting may be created to reduce the upfront cost of Ecolabelled products and make them accessible to a larger population of consumers and businesses.

3. Strengthening Industry Collaboration : Ecolabelled material supply and credibility can be strengthened through collaboration among manufacturers, certification bodies, and other stakeholders. Collaboration will help the players in the industry develop a common framework of standardised ecolabels, accelerate the certification procedure for sustainable products while ensuring that the quality is uniform. Inter-sectoral collaboration between sectors like construction, manufacturing, and finance will help strengthen the ecosystem, which becomes better integrated and supportive of Ecolabelled material adoption.

4. Data Driven Approach - For devising an effective marketing campaign, the usage of customer data for curating personalised campaigns can help to reach a wider segment of the market. A strong use of data analytics to generate campaigns that speak specifically to the specific needs and wants of different stakeholder groups can be highly effective. For instance, messaging the economic benefits of Ecolabelled products for the eco-conscious buyer or the environmental impact for an eco-conscious consumer. Social media marketing can reach a wider audience faster and build interest in sustainable building materials like reinforced concrete products or steel structures.

## 8. MARKETING OF ECOLABELLED BUILDING MATERIALS

Marketing is a must for educating stakeholders and marketing the Ecolabelled products. The right marketing strategies can educate people about the benefits of using sustainable materials and increase their adoption in the construction industry. Marketers can influence B2B stakeholders and end-users to choose sustainable options over conventional materials by educating them on Ecolabelled products Manning (2018).

### Key Marketing Strategies for B2B and End-Buyers

Different marketing strategies can be used to communicate with B2B stakeholders as well as end-buyers.

1. Education Programmes: Conferences and training workshops to educate stakeholders on the value of Ecolabelled products. These activities can offer very helpful information on performance, cost, and environmental aspects of sustainable building materials, therefore enabling stakeholders to make informed choices (Darko, Chan, & Ameyaw, 2017).

2. Content Marketing: Content marketing involves creating content which highlights the benefits of Ecolabelled products. The content can be in various forms such as vlogs, blogs, articles, whitepapers, research papers and even case studies, which focusses on the advantages of Ecolabelled products and how they contribute positively (Hydes & Creech, 2000)

3. Digital Media: Digital media is an effective channel for promote a product either on social media platforms, websites, online targeted advertisements etc. Digital media have a proven to be cost effective and faster in reaching out to multitudes of people on creation of awareness and generating interest in Ecolabelled products and further catalyse the adoption (Nguyen & Altan, 2011).
4. Success Stories: Seeing is believing in marketing, is a maxim. Sharing the success stories of executed products and learnings thereof can instil a lot of confidence among the potential stakeholders. Real world success stories inspire quickly and aid in faster adoption (Sandanayake et al., 2019).

## 9. LIMITATIONS

Despite the many advantages, as well as potential approaches to encouraging Ecolabelled building materials, several limitations need to be considered, for this research paper.

1. Data Limitations: The study mainly relies on secondary data, which might not capture all the nuances and recent developments in the field. Future studies could benefit from primary data collection, including surveys and interviews with industry stakeholders.
2. Regional Differences: Marketing strategies and acceptance of Ecolabelled materials differ significantly between regions. General studies are primarily conducted in this paper, and specific regional studies would be required to adapt the strategy to the regional context.
3. Quickly Changing Market Dynamics: The building material market, as well as the standards in sustainability are continually changing. Findings and recommendations on this paper might call for frequent update for relevance and effectiveness in action.
4. End-User Behavior: It focuses on end-buyer perception, but its focus on the psychology and behavior of consumers is very limited. This area can be explored further by research to have a better idea about the adoption of Ecolabelled materials by end-users.

## 10. CONCLUSION

Marketing Ecolabelled building materials will be important to the construction industry in terms of sustainability. Challenges and perceptions that need to be overcome can be addressed through marketing strategies. There is a need for education, industry collaboration, and financial incentives to achieve the same. Future studies should focus on other strategies for improving the marketing and adoption of sustainable building materials.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Ahn, Yong Han, Kwon, Hyun Soo, and Pearce, Annie R. "Sustainable Construction: Analysis of Its Costs and Benefits." *KSCE Journal of Civil Engineering*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2009, pp. 219-224. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12205-009-0225-0>.
- [2] Chan, Edwin H. W., Qian, Q. K., and Lam, Patrick T. I. "The Market for Green Building in Developed Asian Cities—The Perspectives of Building Designers." *Energy Policy*, vol. 37, no. 8, 2009, pp. 3061-3070. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2009.03.057>.
- [3] Darko, Amos, Chan, Albert P. C., and Ameyaw, Emmanuel E. "Review of Barriers to Green Building Adoption." *Sustainable Development*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2017, pp. 167-179. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.1651>.
- [4] George N. Kenyon [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4471-6627-6\\_5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4471-6627-6_5) In book: *The Perception of Quality* (pp.41-50) [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301210960\\_The\\_Perception\\_Process#:~:text=Perception%20is%20a%20process%20where,noise%20\(stimuli\)%20around%20](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301210960_The_Perception_Process#:~:text=Perception%20is%20a%20process%20where,noise%20(stimuli)%20around%20)
- [5] Global Ecolabeling Network - <https://globalecolabelling.net/>
- [6] Hydes, Kevin R., and Creech, Leslie. "Reducing Mechanical Equipment Cost: The Economics of Green Design." *Building Research & Information*, vol. 28, no. 5-6, 2000, pp. 403-407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/096132100418528>.
- [7] Johnstone, Lucy, and Halliday, Sue. "A History of Eco-labels for Buildings in the UK." *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, vol. 59, 2016, pp. 1382-1392. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2016.01.129>.
- [8] Kang, Yeonsook, and Kim, Jaesuk. "Analyzing the Challenges and Opportunities of Green Building Standards in South Korea." *Sustainability*, vol. 13, no. 19, 2021, p. 10689. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131910689>.

- [9] Luthra, Sunil, Kumar, S., and Garg, D. "Barriers to Implementing Sustainable Supply Chain Management: An Indian Perspective." *International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2015, pp. 106-122. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMCP.2015.070255>.
- [10] Manning, Louise. "The Benefits of Using Ecolabels in Sustainable Procurement." *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, vol. 54, no. 2, 2018, pp. 45-57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jscm.12205>.
- [11] Meryman, Howard, and Silman, Robert. "Sustainable Engineering—Using Specifications to Make It Happen." *Structural Engineer*, vol. 82, no. 2, 2004, pp. 24-26.
- [12] Nguyen, Bao K., and Altan, Hasim. "Comparative Review of Five Sustainable Rating Systems." *Procedia Engineering*, vol. 21, 2011, pp. 376-386. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proeng.2011.11.2024>.
- [13] Papadopoulos, Athanasios M. "State of the Art in Thermal Insulation Materials and Aims for Future Developments." *Energy and Buildings*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2005, pp. 77-86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2004.05.006>.
- [14] Rauf, Masood A., and Crawford, Robert H. "Building Service Life and Its Effect on the Life Cycle Embodied Energy of Buildings." *Energy*, vol. 79, 2015, pp. 140-154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.energy.2014.10.093>.
- [15] Sandanayake, Milena, Zhang, Guangwei, Setunge, Sujeeva, and Thilakaratne, Rajapakse. "Environmental Emission Assessment of a Building Construction Project in Australia: A Comparison between Two Life Cycle Inventory Databases." *Sustainability*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2019, p. 359. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11020359>.
- [16] Xing, Yan, Hewitt, Neil, and Griffiths, Paul. "Zero Carbon Buildings Refurbishment—A Hierarchical Pathway." *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2011, pp. 3229-3236. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2011.04.020>.