AWARENESS OF GREEN MARKETING AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT

Although environmental issues affects all human activities, a dramatic increase has been witnessed in the recent time in environmental consciousness worldwide. A recent survey found that 82% of British citizens considered the environment as an immediate and urgent problem (Dembkowski and Hanmer-Lloyd, 1994), while another study proclaimed that 69 per cent of the general public believe that pollution and other environmental damage are impacting their day to day life (Worcester, 1993). The increase in environmental consciousness has had a major effect on consumer behaviour as well as society becomes more concerned with the usage and consumption of natural environment, businesses have begun to change their behaviour in an attempt to fulfil society's "new" concerns. Some firms have already implement the techniques like EMS (environmental management systems) and waste minimization, and have combined various environmental issues into all organizational routine activities. Some proofs & evidence of this is the development of journals such as "Business Strategy and the Environment" and "Greener Management International," their primary focus is to disseminate research relating to the green marketing and social problems in the business.

"Green Marketing" and "Environmental Marketing" are hot topics of discussions and debates in popular press worldwide. Many governments around the world have attempted to regulate green marketing (Polonsky 1994a). For example, in the USA the Federal Trade Commission and the National Association of Attorneys-General have researched and examined various green marketing issues [FTC 1991, NAAG 1990]. One of the biggest problems with the green marketing area is that very limited literature is available for further research in this topic [Carlson, Grove and Kangun 1993, Davis 1992, Davis 1993]

KEY WORDS

Environmental consciousness, consumer behaviour, natural environment, society, journals, regulate, researched, limited literature.

INTRODUCTION

Green Marketing

Green marketing is on the rise and a rather new area acknowledged for research. There is not one universal definition of green marketing and the definition generally varies according to the
researcher’s viewpoint. Dahlstorm (2011) and Ottman (2011) have characterized green marketing as an integration of ecological concerns into marketing aspects including production, distribution and logistics, promotion and packaging along with marketing communications. Green marketing associates with identifying the consumer needs and satisfying those needs in a valuable and sustainable manner (Peattie, 1995). For this research, the definition adopted states that green marketing can also be used as a strategy that points the consumers towards the benefits of environmentally friendly products to influence their purchasing patterns (Harrison, 1993). Green marketing helps in brand differentiation of companies that in turn focuses on the environmentally aware consumers willing to buy green products (Chan, 2004). It can be inferred from various literature that green marketing basically bridges the communication between environmentally conscious firms and consumers, in turn strengthening their relationship. A green consumer, as stated by Elkington (1994), is indulgent in using environmentally friendly products including the ones using green manufacturing and production methods and the ones that are against animal cruelty and so on. Such green consumers are compelling companies to differentiate themselves by going green and consequently making a new market segment adding to the economies of different nations globally (Juwaheer et al., 2012). Empirical researches have recognized that issues regarding sustainability, awareness about environmental issues and green brands are becoming a focal point in developed and developing nations, with added consciousness from the government and population in general. Studies have been conducted on green buying behavior and attitudes of the different population and it was noted that green marketing was gaining prominence in developing nations (Khare, 2014). In the context of developing countries, studies concluded that green consumption was becoming popular and different elements that influenced green consumptions include, awareness and knowledge about green products, trust in eco-labels and brands, consumers’ concern towards environment’s degradation and their altruistic values, consumers were also found to be more socially integrated and have a cosmopolitan approach and favorable attitude towards green products (Mosafa, 2009, Rahbar and Wahid, 2011 and Juwaheer et al., 2012). India was appraised as a relatively new segment for further research in green marketing in contrast to the other developing nations (Khare,
Green marketing is becoming more popular as more people become concerned with environmental issues and have decided that they want to spend their money in a way that is kinder to the planet. Green marketing involves integrated activities like manufacturing green product, using eco-friendly packaging, sustainable business dealings etc. This type of marketing is more expensive, but it also profitable due to the high demand. Local products of North America are considered much more expensive than those made in other countries using inexpensive labor. For some consumers, the environmental benefit outweighs the price difference. Many observers agree that some business firms enroll for green marketing solely because such an eco-friendly step will enable them to make a profit. Some businesses, however, focuses on running its activities in an environmentally-sensitive fashion because their proprietors feel a responsibility to preserve and prevent the existence of the natural resources even as they satisfy consumer needs and desires.

**Businesses and Green Marketing**

There are significant alterations for activation in the business world in relation to the importance towards the environment and the society. Corporate ethical code of the 21st century is being green. Without a doubt, the main objective of companies is profitability but it is highly difficult for companies with the particular objective of making profit to achieve sustainability. Companies should be mindful of their duties towards the environment and the community similarly as towards customers, workers and shareholders. Climate change, environmental problems and social problems will confront the leaders of future generation for engaging effective and inclusive determinations. In the practice of engaging these determinations, the first concern of business society should be placed on the key of conserving the environment instead of improving the profitability of the business (Boztepe, 2012). In order to improve profitability, which is a direct advantage for the business itself, green marketing can advantage society by promoting not only the communication about but also the practice of green business process. The companies actually have a strong possibility to enhance their attitude if they engaged in environmental business activities. This is because to allege that their products are eco-friendly they have to absolutely assess the product in a way that matches
valid requirements to acquire certified eco-labels. Also, they do not wish to lose the trust of the environmentally conscious consumers they focus on ("Fact Sheet-Green marketing," n.d.).

**Green Marketing Methods**

Beyond producing eco-friendly product, business owners can perform various activities as part of their green marketing efforts. The following can be the ways by which business owners can fulfill his responsibility.

- Using recycled paper and eco-friendly inks for printing marketing materials
- Having a recycling program and responsible waste disposal practices
- Using eco-friendly product packaging
- Using efficient packing and shipping methods
- Using eco-friendly power sources
- Taking steps to offset environmental impact

It is thus clear that previous research has not been able to recognize why a positive consumer attitude fails to convert into a green purchase (Gupta and Ogden, 2009). Further, there has been no comprehensive investigation of the wide-range of factors and their influence on environmentally responsible purchasing (Memery et al., 2005). The authors did not find any review study on attitude-behavior inconsistencies in the context of consumer
green purchase behavior, although empirical studies concerned with various dimensions of green consumption were found. The existing attitude-behavior inconsistency and a lack of proper explanation thereof, along with an absence of a review addressing this issue, motivated the authors to review extant relevant literature on attitude-behavior inconsistency in context of consumers’ green purchasing behavior. In addition, damage to the environment (pollution, depletion of resources, etc.) and as a result increased emphasis on manufacturing sustainable products by firms has made it essential to identify the factors influencing green purchase behavior of consumers, which provides additional motivation for the present research. A review of existing empirical studies would enable the identification of multiple factors motivating or hindering the green purchase behavior of consumers.

**Materialism**

Materialism as has been associated with the consumer culture. The society that takes consumers as an end and consumer’s choice as means, culture of consumerism tends to become the main characteristic (Smith, 1998). Materialism has been conceptualized in different ways one way to interpret materialism is as a personality trait (Belk, 1983), the other way in which materialism has been conceptualized is as value that one manifests to acquisition and consumption of material goods (Inglehart 1981; Richins and Dawson 1992). Materialistic person would value the acquisition and possession of different products (Larsen et al., 1999) and has inner urge to buy something (Belk, 1984). Then there is manifestation of post materialism which puts environmentalism and quality of life as a main concern. The concept of post materialism relates to green consumerism. Both males and females are very much inclined towards consumerism (Gauntlett, 2002)

**Materialism and Green Marketing**

Marketers focus on materialization i.e. sale of product even if it qualifies the environmental criteria or not. Since green consumption is the order of the day, marketers take hold of mind and interest of people who consume or purchase to like to shout it out and try to make an impression (Ottman, 2006). There is no product that does not have minimal impact on environment. The focus should be first on untainted and wholesome environmental friendly
product. This would direct marketing towards conservational and eco-friendly governance. The green marketing to be authentic and indisputable must fulfil some consumer value intent such as there should be effectiveness and cost efficiency; the product must fulfil the standard health and safety requirements; it should be environment friendly in performance and not just give the feeling of being good and environment friendly; there should be green symbolism and status (green labelling); and last but not the least, there should be convenience in purchasing and consuming the same (Ottman, 2006).

Marketers adopt miscommunication techniques to market their product for instance if a product has a small and insignificant feature that makes it green it is more highlighted. To all intents and purposes, when the purchase behaviour of materialistic consumers are being predisposed to green and environmental consumption, the marketers strategise accordingly (Prothero, A., 1990)

**Research Objectives**

**Objectives:**

1. To study the awareness of consumers with respect to green marketing.
2. To find the willingness of the consumers to pay more for green products.
3. To find out awareness about eco-friendly or green products.
4. To analyse relationship between education and income with awareness of green products.

**Hypothesis:**

1. Consumers are aware about green marketing.
2. Consumers are willing to pay more for eco-friendly product.
Discussion

There is a need to keep severe check on marketers who try to so green cataloguing of their product and promote materialistic tendencies in environmentally friendly people. The focus should be on creating consumer value rather than creating the phony portrayal of a product that is actually not so green. There must be awareness among consumers regarding recognition of authenticity of a green product. There must be more consciousness while purchasing such products. The challenge lies in the fact that materialistic people might not give heed to identification of a product as their materialistic intent outweigh the alertness and create discomposure. There have been much talk about ethical consumerism but identification and study of green materialism has gained the attention more recently in consumer behaviour study (Maniates, M., 2002). There is a need for state to play active role in preserving the environmental standards as its deception has become extensive marketing practice now a days.

Conclusion

We need to check if the marketing with the veil of sustainability can be checked by proper policy. There must be a focus on the internalisation of the environmental externalities. There should be policies to promote fair marketing practices. The marketer should be liable to pay for environmental restoration if they have indulged in unscrupulous approaches. Steps should be taken to avoid green marketing myopia wherein marketers overemphasize the environmental aspect to the detriment of genuine satisfaction of consumers (Ottman, 2006). Marketers must follow the ethical code and conduct. There must be dematerialization of products. Their marketing communication must be reliability and more credible. There is a need to internalize the marketers for any deception and miscommunication in order to boost the sale of the product where in the overall impact is as much as a non-green labelled product.
Future scope for study

This paper is a preliminary attempt to relate green consumption and green marketing orientation. The study on green consumption is limited in Indian context. Future empirical study can be done on the impact of myopic response to ostensibly green marketing. Further research can look at the power of the association between materialism and green marketing.

References:


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