

Green Marketing: Consumer's Attitude Towards Eco-Friendly Products

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Abstract

The research study is on green marketing but specifically on consumer's attitudes and purchase intention of eco-friendly products. It has been the global concern for the purpose of the preservation of the polluting and degradation of environment. Companies today have understood the importance of green marketing in order to produce eco-friendly products. The objective is to the influence of the four traditional marketing mix elements, satisfaction and word of mouth on attitude and purchasing intention of consumers on eco-friendly products specifically fast moving consumer goods or non-durable ones. However, a positive attitude towards green products do not always lead to action i.e. purchase of these products. Positive attitudes concerning willingness to pay an extra price for green products are also correlated with green products. So, every consumer express different attitude regarding green products.

Keywords - Green marketing, green products, consumer attitude.

Introduction

The need for green marketing practices by corporations around the world is identified to be a result of overall increase in the consumer awareness of lack of environmental protection and social inequities. Over the last decade environmentalism has emerged to be a vital aspect due to increasing issues related to acid rains, depletion of the ozone layer, and degradation of the land and many more pressing environmental issues. This resulted in increase in consumer concern with regards to restoration of ecological balance by presenting demands for eco friendly products in countries around the world. (Doyle 1992; Vandermerwe and Oliff 1990). There is a great deal of depletion of non renewable energy resources which accompanied by generation of non bio degradable pollutants has lead to an increase in consumer and corporate awareness of green marketing issues. The growth of green marketing research dates back to 1980s when there was emergence of concept of green marketing. Early literature indicates green marketing to be an approach which indicated signs of shift in consumer attention to green product. At that time green marketing research concentrated on the shift in consumer consumption of green products. There was a great deal of empirical research carried out to identify interest among consumers in using and purchasing green products. (Chammaro et al., 2009; Bhattacharya, 2011) Green marketing approach was researched from a corporate interest point of view in the early 90s. Research indicated that 92% of MNCs from Europe changed their products to address growing concerns of environmental pollution. (Vandermerwe and Oliff, 1990) Green marketing research has come a

long way since then. Consumers from the developed countries including USA and Western Europe were found to be more conscious about the environment. Research in the last decade has indicated that consumers are aware and are willing to pay more to "go green". Companies have using green marketing for many reasons such as green policies are profit-making; the business world is more and more implicated in the social responsibilities. Furthermore consumers have been changing of attitudes and due to the government and the competitive pressures it is essential for firms to consider the "green" adjective to marketing strategies (Bhattacharya, 2011; Prakash, 2002).

Green Marketing

The negative consequences on the environment due to companies' and human activities have led companies to develop eco-friendly products. The consumption of eco-friendly products and consumers' attitudes towards these products has led to the development of the green marketing mix "which preserves environmental resources and at the same time deliver value added products and services.

Green marketing term appeared at the end of the 1980's. This concept has been defined by many researchers such as Stanton and Futrell (1987), Mintu and Lozanda (1993) and Polonsky (1994), (in a broad sense it is the marketing activities which facilitate exchanges to satisfy consumer needs and wants by minimizing the impact of these activities on the physical environment. According to Chen and Chai green marketing is defined as "the activities taken by firms concerned about environmental problems or green problems, by delivering the environmental sound goods or services to create customers' and society's satisfaction". Green marketing has been developing because even if the human wants are unlimited the natural and artificial resources are limited. Green marketing-mix elements and eco-friendly products are designed and developed as having less harmful for the environment. (Polonsky and Rosenberger, 2001).

Green Marketing and Green consumers

Environmental marketing, more popularly known as green marketing or sustainable marketing can be defined as the effort by a company to design, promote, price and distribute products in a manner which promotes environmental protection. Green marketing has be defined as 'all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment'. Today green marketing is a vital component of marketing research which began due to increasing media exposure and pressure on firms to present eco friendly behaviour. The growth in green marketing over the years has been promoted by adoption of product packaging and presenting to the public these improvements. Over the years there has been a subtle shift from practicing environmental marketing practices as a result of compulsion identified as a result of legislations and pressure from environmental groups to genuine efforts to improve sustainable marketing plans and behaving in an eco responsible manner. Consumerism can perhaps be identified as a movement which initially begun as a process which was presented to protect consumers against practices of unethical marketing. Over time this has extended and become broader in nature. (Eriksson, 2002). When today's agenda with regards to consumer activism is taken into consideration it can be observed that protection of the environment is the

most vital aspect. There is a resultant increase in the concern expressed towards environmental protection leading to "green consumerism". The growth of green marketing and green consumer is "perhaps the biggest opportunity for enterprise and invention the industrial world has ever seen". A green consumer can be identified to be one who avoids any product which may harm damage to any living organism, cause deterioration of the environment during process of manufacturing or during process of usage, consume a large amount of non renewable energy, involves unethical testing on animals or human subjects. (Elkington, 1994). An eco-friendly product is supposed to reduce the impact of its consumption on the environment thanks to the use of making-processes, components and recycling techniques which are less harm for the natural environment than those of conventional products

Global Scenario in Green Marketing

"Green" is the buzzword that is gaining popularity among the current generation. A number of businesses right from private entities such as Wal-Mart trying to push the concept of organic food to public entities like the London governments congestion charge are all aimed at improving the environment by promoting 'Green' products and issues. 87% of people from various nations like Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, the UK and the US have shown an interest in reducing their impact on the environment, according to a survey by (McKinsey, 2007). However, showing interest and actually acting on the interest are two different deeds. This fact is proved by a survey that was conducted on a global scale, which was repeated in 2008 with the help of BBC World, which showed that not a lot of people were actually doing something to move their lifestyle to a green lifestyle. There is a growing need to switch over to green products and services by both marketers and consumers. Even though the shift to 'green' will be expensive to both the consumers as well as businesses, it will most definitely pay off in the long run. The core idea of green marketing is to create awareness among people on the environmental issues and how consumers would be helping the environment if they switch over to green products. Thus green marketing aims to provide more information to people and also gives those more choices to switch over to green lifestyle. The corporations are becoming more aware of their responsibilities towards the environment. This has forced the law makers, environment groups, consumers, financial institution, insurers and the organization's own employees to become more aware of environmental aspects and this in turn has led to an increase in the number of policies and schemes and regulations at both the national and international levels.

Consumer Attitude towards the Environment

Environmental attitude is identified as the judgment an individual has towards the protection and promotion of the environment. Conflicting results have been published with regards to the relationship that currently exists between attitude towards the environment and the resultant behaviour. (Kotchen and Reiling, 2000). There has been other empirical research which has concluded that the relationship is moderate at best. (Davis, 1995) Green marketing depends on the consumer's attitude towards the environment. If there is no strong demand for such a shift in consumer attitude, businesses will not put in the extra effort to move towards introducing green products and services. Based on this evidence three different aspects can be arrived at in terms of identifying the relationship between environmental attitude and behaviour: 1) Need for more

specific studies identifying the relationship between attitude and behaviour. 2) Need to identify other variables which have a mediating effect on both these attributes.

Perceived Seriousness of Environmental Problems

The deterioration of the environment led to the adoption and the development of consciousness of consumers' attitude towards eco-friendly products in order to preserve the planet. There have been a number of studies that have dealt with the topic of perceived seriousness of environmental problems. According to (Dunlap, 1994) most of these studies concentrated on determining the subjects view of the problem, its seriousness and how it differs from the numerous cultures. The studies found that some of the most common problems were air quality, sewage treatment and water quality. People living in the Asian nations were found to be more concerned with such problems when compared to their counterparts from other Western nations. One reason for this is that the Asian community tends to perceive their local communities in a negative manner than their Western or European counterparts. (Dunlap, 1994) In recent times a lot of attention has been paid to the effect that mass media has on the audience's perceived seriousness of environmental hazards. It has become a global struggle to achieve the purpose of the environmental protection so companies are using various means to persuade the consumers' segments who are environmentally conscious to change their attitudes from the conventional products towards green products and also satisfy their needs.

Research Methodology

The current research paper is a conceptual study in to green marketing. Therefore the researcher adopted a qualitative research strategy. According to (Ader et al., 2008), there are no independent or dependant variables involved in a qualitative study as a qualitative strategy is not experimental in nature. (Saunders, M, et al 2003), states that when it comes to conceptual research, it is important to review previously done researches on the same subject matter. A qualitative approach allows for an elastic process during which changes can be made and incorporated into the research. The current study does adopt a purely qualitative strategy as this research involves a dependent variable (Consumer perception of green marketing) and its impact on independent variable (attitude and behaviour towards green consumerism).

Conclusion and Implications

One thing that is being reiterated is that the current consumption levels are too high and are unsustainable. Therefore there is a need for green marketing and a need for a shift in the consumer's behaviour and attitude towards more environmental friendly life styles. The current study is a compilation of various aspects related to green marketing. It is clearly evident from review of literatures and the conceptual model that the majority of the consumers still lack 'green' knowledge and because of such low awareness towards green products organizations are still not pushing towards developing more green products nor are they working hard on green packaging. Organizations still believe that marketing aspects such as developing a proper supply chain, packaging, pricing etc take precedence over green marketing initiatives. However, this is all changing. People are beginning to realize their role and responsibilities towards the environment. Although this change is not happening quickly, it is happening. Businesses are

looking towards gaining an edge in the green market industry by trying to re-package their products into a more environmental friendly product. They are cutting down on extras and wasted materials and turning their operations into more efficient and green operation. Companies are also starting to educate the masses with an increase in advertising that puts emphasis on green products and how they are more beneficial for the consumers. This kind of advertising goes a long way in educating the masses and promoting the concept of green products among the people. With more and more consumers willing to pay a little extra towards green products, organizations are taking notice of the demands and behaviour and attitude of the consumers.

Recommendations

Green marketing is a continuous process that requires constant inputs from the suppliers, government legislations and policies and the people. This is required so that the businesses green marketing strategy can be aligned to the target markets and so it can gain a sustainable competitive advantage. It is important that strategies and policies in relation to green products be developed and implemented so as to guide and help the retailers and customers towards a green change. Businesses should concentrate on focusing on developing a green product that have a demand from the general public and which also aligns to the company's core positioning. Furthermore businesses should also present efforts in a manner that reduces the risk related to costs. In conclusion, creating and implementing a green marketing strategy is not straight forward because it is not only complex, but also a relative concept that continuously varies over time.

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