



A STUDY OF CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS GREEN PRODUCTS

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Abstract

Increasing awareness on the various environmental problems has led a shift in the way consumers go about their life. There has been a change in consumer attitudes towards a green lifestyle. People are actively trying to reduce their impact on the environment. However, this is not widespread and is still evolving. Organizations and business however have seen this change in consumer attitudes and are trying to gain an edge in the competitive market by exploiting the potential in the green market industry. Green marketing, while incorporating these claims, is a broader concept. It includes not only altering the advertising of a product but also a variety of activities such as altering production processes, changing packaging and modifying products. The objective of the present study is to identify consumer attitude towards green products.

Introduction

Green marketing is also termed as environmental marketing or ecological marketing. According to American Marketing Association, marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe is called as Green Marketing. Thus wide range of activities are covered under green marketing, which includes modifying the product, making changes in the production process and packaging, as well as modifying advertising or removing any activity that impacts the environment in negative way. Today, the Earth faces more environmental issues than ever before, hence it is imperative for companies to make and market them as environment friendly. Green marketing is emerging as a popular promotional strategy owing to increased consumer awareness and concerns.

Green marketing has rose attention due to the environmental deterioration and it becomes a global problem (Kumar, 2011, p. 59). Nowadays, the American Marketing Association (AMA) divides the definition of green marketing in three aspects (marketingpower.com): as “the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe” (retailing definition) as “the development and marketing of products designed to minimize negative effects on the physical environment or to improve its quality” (social marketing definition) and finally as “the efforts by organizations to produce, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns” (environments definition).

The green movement has been expanding rapidly in the world. With regards to this consumers are taking responsibility and doing the right things. Consumer awareness and motivation continue to drive change in the marketplace, notably through the introduction of more eco-friendly products. Compared to consumers in the developed countries, the Indian consumer has much less awareness of global warming issues. Successful marketing has always been about recognizing trends and positioning products, services and brand in a manner that supports buyer intentions. Today, "Green" marketing has moved from a trend to a way of doing business and Businesses that sell should recognize (a) the value of going green and (b) incorporating this message into their marketing program and communicating the green concept to their consumers. Green is slowly and steadily becoming the symbolic colour of eco-consciousness in India. The growing consumer awareness about the origin of products and the concern over impending global environmental crisis there are increasing the opportunities to marketers to convince consumers. Firms have increasingly introduced GPIs (Green Product Innovations) into theirProduct developments over recent decades.

Studies on the consumption of environmentally sustainable products have demonstrated that perceived product performance is a significant barrier to their selection. For example, Ottman (1998) shows that some consumers do not buy “green” products because of their perceived inferiority, citing a study of observable and product specific information (e.g. use of biodegradable and recycling behaviour) by Roper Starch Worldwide (RSW). Alston and Prince Roberts (1999) found, in their research on environmental strategy and new product development, that there was a willingness to pay slightly more for environmental improvement. However, in his research on green product innovation strategy, Driessen (2005) finds that in order to maintain a competitive advantage, an optimum level of greenness needs to be identified between innovation performance and greenness, thus avoiding merely capturing the niche green market. So, if the market for environmentally sustainable products is to become main stream, it is important to look at what factors influence the consumer’s selection process. . This paper is to understand the concept



of Green marketing and to review some of the studies that have dealt with the concept of Green marketing and to identify the relationship between the various consumer attitudes and green marketing.

Objective of the study

The objective of the present study is to identify consumer attitude towards green products.

Literature review

Green marketing

Today, many companies have accepted their responsibility not to harm the environment. So, products and production processes become cleaner and more companies „go green“, because they realize that they can reduce pollution and increase profits at the same time (Hart, 1997, p. 67). Green marketing is a creative opportunity to innovate in ways that make a difference and at the same time achieve business success (Grant, 2007, p. 10). As business activities caused many of the environmental problems in the past and still do, there is increasing recognition that business is vital in the process of a more ecological sustainable society. Companies, especially multinationals, play an essential role in the world economy, and they have also the resources and capacity to put ecological solutions into practice (Tjärnemo, 2001, p. 29). Companies have a responsibility to drive the development towards greater sustainability and becoming greener, so that a company's aim is to create markets for more environmentally friendly products and services and educate and influence customers to change (Hart, 1997, p. 67). At least two motives for companies to change to more environmentally appropriate strategies and practices are cost saving and the market opportunity potential. Companies can save money by reducing the amount of raw material and energy used in production. Becoming more eco-oriented and offering environmentally friendlier products might result in increased market shares as well as an improved company image and thus, companies gaining first-mover advantages in greening should become more competitive (Tjärnemo, 2001, pp. 29-30). This first-mover advantage however is not sufficient anymore as more companies orient themselves ecological and customers can choose from a variety of eco-labeled products.

The role of marketing has become a matter of discussion as lifestyles and consumption patterns in the industrialized world are a major originator of environmental damage. On the one hand, marketing has been criticized for contributing to the environmental degradation by emphasizing on consumption, consequently contributing to a throwaway society and emphasizing on satisfying short-term consumer or customer wants. On the other hand, marketing can be seen as a significant instrument in order to sell new lifestyles and change overall consumption habits, not only to ecologically concerned consumers. Thus, marketing should contribute to more sustainable forms of society. Marketing has developed and widened its scope towards ecological issues from focusing on the production process, transaction and exchange. There is more than one definition of green marketing (Tjärnemo, 2001, p. 34-36). For example, Peattie (1995, p. 28) defines green marketing management as “the holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the requirements of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way” while Coddington (1993, p. 1) defines it as “marketing activities that recognize environmental stewardship as a business development responsibility and business growth opportunity [...]”. However, both definitions entail an overall eco-orientation further than the marketing section, the universal strategy or philosophy.

A green consumer is defined by Peattie (2001, p. 187-191) as someone who voluntarily engages in consumer practices that are regarded as environmentally friendly by marketing academics and practitioners. Thus, green or environmentally friendly activities deal, for instance, with energyefficient operations, better pollution controls and recycled materials (Armstrong and Kotler, 2007, p. 509). Eco labels are a main tool used in green marketing. Eco labels are defined as labels which identify overall environmental preference of a product or service within a specific product or service range. So, an eco-labeled product is entitled to carry a logo that comes with a claim that the product has been produced in accordance with certain environmental standards. An eco label, in contrast to green symbols or statements, has to consist of three components, namely, the certification standard, an independent accreditation body and independent certification bodies. Eco-labeling schemes demand independent third-party certifications that the product concerned meets the predefined standards, ensuring strict and continuous compliance with the standard by producers. Consequently, the managing label guarantees the correctness of the claim of the eco label (European Commission Homepage).

However, notwithstanding reports that environmental problems constituted one of the uppermost public concerns, market growth for green products disappointingly fell short of marketers' expectations (Wong et al., 1996). The dramatic growth in green



marketing excitements at the beginning of the 1990s has gradually subsided (Peattie and Crane, 2005). Green marketing entered its second stage in the 1990s, when marketers started to experience a backlash (Wong et al., 1996). Gradually, marketers 45abeling that consumer concern for the environment and a related desire for green products did not translate into purchasing behaviour (Schrum et al., 1995). Among all the major hindrances, the main aspect contributing to the backlash against green marketing was consumer cynicism about green products, green claims and the companies' intention as well as practices (Mendleson and Polonsky, 1995; Peattie and Crane, 2005; Wong et al., 1996). From the mid-1990s, consumers started to become more and more environmentally and socially aware (Strong, 1996). Critical consumers began to emerge as a new force of green consumerism during that period whereby they require social responsibility from corporations (Gurařu and Ranchhod, 2005).

Gradually, the rise of green consumerism has led to an even broadened consumption concept called ethical consumerism (Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004). According to Uusitalo and Oksanen (2004), ethical consumerism refers to buyer behaviour that reflects a concern with the problems that arise from unethical and unjust global trades, such as child and low-paid labour, infringement of human rights, animal testing, labour union suppressions, inequalities in trading relations with the Third World and pollution of the environment (Strong, 1996). Both green consumerism and its subsequent ethical consumerism are forms of symbolic consumption because consumers consider not only individual but also social values, ideals and ideologies (Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004). Since, the emergence of the green consumerism and ethical consumerism which arose in the mid-1990s, consumers have started to demand a say in the production, processing and resourcing of the products.

Anticipating the continuous uprising forces of consumerism, scholars started to call for "sustainability marketing" in the late-1990s (Charter and Polonsky, 1999). Sustainability marketing refers to the building and maintaining of sustainable relationships with customers, social environment and the natural environment (Charter and Polonsky, 1999). In the face of the challenges, green marketing entered a "self-adjusting" mode, whereby only corporations with a true intention for long-term sustainable business development continued to stay and improve on their products. Since 2000, green marketing has evolved into a third stage.

With the implementation of more advanced technology, stricter state enforcement on deceptive claims, government regulations and incentives as well as closer scrutiny from various environmental organisations and the media, many green products have greatly improved and regained consumer confidence in the 2000s (Gurařu and Ranchhod, 2005; Ottman, 2007).. Together, with the continuous rise of growing global concern about the environmental quality, green marketing has gradually picked up momentum again. Some researchers postulate (Stafford, 2003) that green marketing is now "making a comeback" (Ottman et al., 2006, p. 26).

The attitude-behavior link

It has always been believed by consumer behaviorists that an individual's actions can be predicted by their attitudes. There have been a number of attempts to improve the ability to predict an individual's actions and a variety of factors have also been suggested to involve factors which can be classified as either dispositional or situational. Spruyt (2007) indicate that prediction of behavior is directly dependent on attitude of the consumer which is found to be associated with knowledge and personal experience they have (Davidson et al., 1985).

The impact of beliefs and attitude on consumer buying habits has been studied extensively (Fazio and Zanna 1981; Ajzen 1989). Furthermore research in this area has indicated that if attitudes are to be used in predicting the consumers behavior's then there are a number of methodological issues that have to be sorted out. According to (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977), behavior and attitudes have to be measured at the same correspondence level. There are a number of theories that have been put forth to explain the process by which attitudes predict behavior. According to (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980, p. 5), theory of reasoned action, "people consider the implications of their actions before they decide to engage or not engage in a given behavior". Thus according to the above theory, people's attitudes play a significant role when it comes to their forming an intention to act in a certain behavior. The model primarily argues that people engage in processing that leads to the formation of attitudes, norms and intentions prior to performing the behavior.

However, the theory of reasoned action is not the only theory that deals with people's attitudes and behaviors. Fazio (1986), proposed another theory in which he states that "attitudes guide behavior through an automatic and spontaneous process instead of a deliberate one as argued by the earlier two theories". Furthermore Fazio (1989) also stated certain conditions in which behaviors and attitudes will be consistent. They are: When the attitude influences perception.



Thus when an individual forms a favorable (or unfavorable) attitude towards an object then the object will automatically be seen as one that has many favorable (or unfavorable) characteristics to the individual.

In spite of the presence of theories that aid in prediction of behaviors from an individual's attitude, when it comes to environmental consumerism, the predictive ability of attitude is still being debated by researchers. There have been a number of attempts to provide a valid explanation to the presence of inconsistencies among behavior and attitudes, effects of external variables and lack of measurement reliability and validity (Mainieri et al., 1997), low correlations among environmental behaviors and different levels of specificity in the attitude behavior measures.

Previously done research studies have proven that there is no significant correlation between the pro environmental behaviors performed by an individual (Tracy and Oskamp, 1983-1984). Thus these studies showed that people who are into recycling may not be into carpooling. Therefore such inconsistencies exist because researchers tend to focus on a generalized view instead of measuring a specific behavioral aspect, according to (Mainieri et al., 1997). (Gadenne, 2011; Wulf and Schroder, 2003) recommended that in order to predict specific behaviors the attitudes measured have to be directed at a specific environmental issue like purchasing of green products. Furthermore, according to (Mainieri et al., 1997), the relationship between environmental attitudes and behavior may be confounded by situational factors (social norms, other attractive choices or economic constraints) and personal factors (knowledge, motivation or attitudes).

Green marketing: Consumer attitude-behavior link

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 behavior (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 behavior:

1. Need for more specific studies identifying the relationship between attitude and behavior.
2. Need to identify other variables which have a mediating effect on both these attributes.
3. Perceived Seriousness of Environmental Problems.

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. An example of one such study is the research done by Moser and Uzzell (2003). In that study, the authors stated that the audiences are influenced by the way the mass media interprets the pollution levels. A study on perception of environmental risks by (Bord and O'Connor, 1997) revealed that women were more perceptible to the risks involved in global warming and other related hazardous wastes when compared to the males. Furthermore the study also found that women were more worried about the various negative impacts that global warming could have on their health on their family's health. Businesses have started to understand consumer's attitude towards environmental problems and have therefore started to provide 'Green' products/services that provide an alternative to consumers. Green marketing is done by businesses to increase awareness levels and to show that people worried about the environment can do something to solve some of the issues.

Perceived environmental responsibility

According to a study by (Lai, 2000), the citizens of Hong Kong were found to be much more literate when it comes to issues regarding the environmental problems over the past few years. This clearly shows that people living in Hong Kong are more



responsible when it comes to protecting their environment. However the study also determined that even though they were more aware of the problems their sense of individual duty towards taking corrective measures was significantly weak. On one hand they expected their government to take full responsibility of ensuring that all environmental related issues were solved through more proactive public policies and on the other hand they were not ready to follow through with the proposals that the government was suggesting in a bid to improve the environmental quality (Lai, 2000). Zelezny et al. (2000) have evidenced in their study that compared to males, females had higher levels of perceived personal responsibility towards environmental protection.

This difference in gender when it comes to the subject of environmental responsibility is explained mostly by the norm activation model that originated from the social psychology context (Schwartz, 1977). According to this model, most individuals are more likely to develop a helping behavior only when they become aware of the dangerous consequences that arise from global warming and when they actually feel responsible for their part in perpetuating this damage to the environment. In a sense, environmental behavior carries an altruistic meaning, whereby individuals may need to have a strong "other" orientation and willingness to sacrifice their time for preferred activities to protect the environment for the long-term benefits of the earth and human race. According to a study by (Gough, 1994), females tend to have a better ability to take control and take the responsibility for alleviating problems in the world and also they are the ones who have a stronger sense of ethics.

Consumer behavior towards eco labeling

One important tool of green marketing involves the promotion of eco labels on environmentally friendly products (D Souza et al., 2006). Eco labeling is an effective measure which helps in bridging the gap between sellers and buyers by providing information on two aspects: Information function presenting intangible quality measures including product quality and Value function which presents the recyclability and CSR related brand prestige (Sammer and Wustenhagen 2006). Empirical research has concentrated on the need to look for ways by which eco labels will directly impact consumer purchase intention of products which are deemed to environmental safe (D Souza et al., 2006; Sammer and Wustenhagen 2006). There is a need to identify the impact eco labeling will have directly on the consumer environmental attitude in terms of decision making. The consumer awareness of eco labeling and its impact on consumer intent to purchase an eco friendly product has been researched and conflicting views have been expressed (D Souza, 2004;

Rashid 2009; Lyer 1999). Rashid (2009) has identified that when consumers are aware of eco labels they react more positively towards knowledge of green marketing and the purchase of green products. The research by Kuhn (1999) also adds value to his research by identifying that the promotion of eco friendly product manufacturing will definitely help improving a company's market share due to the ability of the company to present sustainable marketing strategies. Conflicting view was presented by Leire and Thidell (2005) who identified that consumer awareness of eco labeling does not necessarily lead to their green purchase decisions. This is further augmented by the research of Bleda and Valente (2008) indicated that eco labeling schemes have been linked to negative firm performance. D Souza (2004) on the other hand identified that there is not enough empirical evidence available to identify the relationship between the use of eco labels on products and its ultimate impact on eco friendly labels.

The reason behind this maybe due to lack of trust among consumers (Lyer, 1999) with regards to the effectiveness of eco labels which is result of their ignorance of the concept of eco labeling. The reason behind this consumer cognition has not been very well understood. Overall the the understood perception is that eco labels are instruments which draw consumers by explaining their impact on the environment. The first eco labeling scheme Blue Angel eco label was introduced in Germany and today 30 different eco labeling methods are available. Countries in Asia have recently begun implementing labeling schemes which are uniquely their own as seen in India, Thailand, China and Japan.

Research methodology

In order to investigate the research objective, both primary and secondary data have been collected and analyzed. The first stage of the research process was an extensive search of articles, reports and professional information concerning eco-consumer studies and ecomarketing strategies in general using the internet and academic databases.

The analysis of secondary information provided the general context for initiating the collection, analysis and the interpretation of primary data. The study was carried out in various cities of Andhra Pradesh (India).



Statistical methods

The statistical methods used in the analysis were: Percentage analysis is used to indicate the demographic profile of the respondents. Mean, Coefficient of Variation and standard deviation is used to find the consumers attitude towards green products.

Sampling design

A convenient sampling design was followed and intercept method was used for data collection. One hundred and twenty consumers with an age ranging from 21 to 45 years were approached with a structured questionnaire.

Data collection and analysis

Demographic Profile of Respondents

As shown in Table 1 84% the respondents were male, while 16% were female. 53.7% of the respondents interviewed were of the age group of 21-25 years, 38.3% in the age group of 26-35. From the survey, 67.9% of the respondents had annual income less than 5 lacks. 34% were employed while 38.3% of the respondents' were housewife.

Table 1 Demographic profile

Character	Percentage	Character	Percentage
Gender		Annual Income	
Male	84	Less than 5 lacs	67.9
Female	16	5-10 lacs	21.6
Age		10-15lacs	8
Below 21years	0.8	More than 15lacs	2.5
21-25years	53.7	Occupation	
26-35years	38.3	Student	21.6
Above 35years	7.2	House-wife	38.3
		Working	5.6
		Retired	34.5

Here is the questionnaire which consists of marketing issues related to attitudes towards green products, designed to explore topics identified in the consumer behavior and advertising industry opinion sections. The suggested responses were: strongly agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, and strongly disagree.



S.No	Consumer Product Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Coefficient of Variation
1	Do you think good about buying brands which are less damaging to the environment?	3.15	0.73	23.25
2	Is it easy for you to identify these products?	3.18	0.85	26.81
3	Green products are inferior in performance to non-green products.	2.72	0.94	34.62
4	Do you trust well-known brands to make products which work?	3.45	0.7	20.27
5	Green products save environment	3.18	0.68	21.24
6	In the marketing communication about a product, do you expect to be informed of how environmentally friendly a product is?	2.07	1.04	50.29
7	Green products are always overpriced	2.90	0.86	29.57
8	Green-products are satisfying in terms of quality.	2.68	0.89	33.26
9	Green products are real ecological need and not just another marketing strategy.	2.23	1.06	47.62
10	Do you think green products are reliable	3.08	0.72	23.35

Out of 10 propositions on Consumer Product Questions(CPQ), 5 propositions mean score is 3 or above on likert-5 point scale (coded as 0,1,2,3 & 4) for propositions 1,2,4,8 and 10 which means most of the respondents have strongly agreed for these propositions and same is supported by relatively less SD and less C.V.

For the propositions 3,7 and 8 respondents gave above average mean score which means they all agreed on these propositions. and for remaining 6 and 9th propositions respondents gave poor score and on these two propositions respondents opinion varies a lot which is clear from these proposition SDs and C.Vs respectively The data collected was coded with least indicates 0 and maximum indicates 4 on Likert 5-point scale (likert-5 point scale coded as 0,1,2,3 & 4).

Findings

The study has following findings:

Respondents reacted positively about buying brands which are less damaging to environment (80 per cent). Majority (60 percent) consumers expressed that identifying environmentally products on the shelves of the store is slightly difficult. When asked, majority of the respondents are unable to name a specific product or product type which are eco-friendly. This speaks about the consumer unawareness of green brands. Few of the respondents believe that green products save environment.

Survey reveals that the green product performance was significantly affected by environmental beliefs. Marketing plays a pivotal role in bringing consumer awareness. As the response show consumers would be more likely to choose environmentally friendly brands and were unable to recall green products/brands. This speaks about the gap in marketing effort put by the green marketers in bringing consumer awareness.



Conclusion

Though consumers are willing to purchase green products, many business organizations still in behind the need of the eco friendly society. The authors suggest business organizations to follow strategies in order to get benefits from the environmentally friendly approach as green marketing offers business incentives and growth opportunities while it may involve start-up costs, it will save money in the long term. Therefore, in the product strategy, marketers can identify customers' environmental needs and develop products to address this issue, produce more environmentally responsible packages. (Recycle, biodegradable, reuse), and ensure that products meet or exceed the quality expectations of customers. Green marketing should not neglect the economic aspect of marketing. Marketers need to understand the implications of green marketing. If we think customers are not concerned about environmental issues or will not pay a premium for products that are more eco-responsible, think again. We must find an opportunity to enhance our product's performance and strengthen our customer's loyalty and command a higher price.

For marketing of the green products to be effective we have to maintain three things; be genuine, educate our customers and give them opportunity to practice. Marketers need to understand the implications of green marketing. If we think customers are not concerned about environmental issues or will not pay a premium for products that are more eco-responsible, think again. We must find an opportunity to enhance product's performance and strengthen our customer's loyalty.

So, if today's successful marketing is about appealing to personal values and delivering consumer empowerment, and then surely the time is right to inject sustainable development into the marketing mix to help address some of the gritty issues currently facing our planet. Green marketing methods produce highly effective results. They apply all of the steps you need to cut costs, raise response rates and increase growth in the most important marketing metric we are all held accountable for—the bottom line.

Recommendation

Practical implications — A technique for understanding consumer willingness-to-pay (WTP) is provided and insights into differences are offered between products in terms of WTP for greener products. Practitioners can use this technique to determine the price range and indirectly the profitability of a version of their product based on recycled or reused content.

Green marketing subsumes greening products as well as greening firms. Though normative concerns impact consumers' and firms' decision making, economic aspects of green marketing should not be neglected. Managers need to identify what ought to be greened: systems, processes or products? Consumer apathy to green products is due to many factors, including inadequate information about levels of greenness, lack of credibility of firms' claims and the tendency to free ride. It also seems that green products that offer direct excludable benefits to consumers (such Green Consumption). Consumer apathy may also be attributed to the belief that individual actions alone cannot impact the macro picture, and collective endeavors are impeded by free riding.

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