

Green Marketing Towards Sustainable Development: A Conceptual Understanding

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ABSTRACT

The globalization era of the modern world faces a major challenge in keeping the natural environment safe in its goal to satisfy while retaining consumers. As environmental problems increase the world over there arises a need to protect the natural environment of the earth. Increasing awareness among consumers today with respect to various environmental issues and problems cause them to actively participate in reducing their impact on environment by opting for green products.

Green Marketing refers to an innovative branch in marketing tending to focus on the protection of environment while attending to customer satisfaction. Environmental or green marketing is considered to be an agent towards the goal of sustainable development in the midst of rising pollution levels, which will consequently lead to a possible eventual wipe out of human life. The paper describes the current Indian consumer market and delves into the major opportunities and challenges posed to businesses in green marketing. The paper focuses on how green marketing gives heed to the concern of natural environment preservation which can benefit both firms and consumers.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Sustainable Development, Opportunities, Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Green marketing is the marketing of products under the presumption of environmental safety. Green marketing consists of all activities in a design to satisfy human needs or wants, such that those wants are satisfied with minimal detrimental effect to the natural environment albeit with increasing awareness on the issues and consequences of non-biodegradable solid waste, global warming, harmful impact of pollutants etc.

However the definition of green marketing is not a simple feat as several meanings intermingle and contradict each other; like the existence of varying environmental, social and retail definitions that come with this term. Other similar terms used are Environmental Marketing, Sustainable marketing, Green advertising, Ecological Marketing and Organic Marketing. Thus "Green Marketing" refers to holistic marketing concept wherein the end to end life of products and services happen in a manner less harmful to the environment yet able to meet the needs of the consumer. Both marketers and consumers are becoming highly sensitive, either by volition or compulsion, to the shift to green products and

services. Though this "green" shift may seem expensive for the current moment, it will surely prove itself much needed yet advantageous, in cost terms also, in the far reach.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH DESIGN

One major challenge with the green marketing area is that there is very little academic examination. While some literature exists, it comes from different perspectives. The present study is of an exploratory nature aiming to provide a clarified guideline for further research. It also takes up descriptive nature focusing on fact finding with adequate interpretation. To this end, secondary data were collected via magazines, newspapers, journals, books, conference proceedings, Government statements and websites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Oyewole, P. (2001) in his paper presented a conceptual link among environmental justice, industrial ecology and green marketing arguing for greater awareness of environmental justice in the practice for green marketing. A research agenda was

finally suggested to determine awareness of consumers to environmental justice, and their willingness to bear the associated costs.

According to Simons and others (2006), on implementation of advanced technology, better state enforcement on deceptive claims, government regulations and incentives in addition to closer scrutiny from various environmental and media organisations, many green products have greatly improved and consumer confidence has increased with respect to green products

Prothero, A. & Fitchett, J.A. (2000) argued that greater ecological enlightenment can be achieved through capitalism by making use of the commodity culture characteristics to further reach and improve on environmental goals. Marketing is not only able but responsible to contribute to the establishment of more sustainable social forms being a principal agent in the operation and rise of commodity discussion. Kilbourne, W.E. (1998) discusses that green marketing has failed to move beyond the boundaries of the prevailing paradigm. The author identified areas to be examined with respect to their effect in the marketing effort's relationship with social, political, economic, cultural and technological dimensions of the environment.

Karna, J., Hansen, E. & Juslin, H. (2003) identify that proactive marketers are the most prolific group in implementing environmental marketing voluntarily by seeking competitive advantage through environmental affability.

In Donaldson's (2005) study, he realized that in Great Britain, after initial hesitation, the ecological sensitivity of consumers had a positive change. This study reported the known commercial brands ability to elucidate loyalty from customers and in the feeble behaviour referring to the "green" claims, which propagated the consumers failure to interpret their behavioral concerns beyond the environment.

What Is Green Marketing?

Green Marketing is the marketing of a product based on its environmental performance or we can say that it is the holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer and social requirements, in a way both profitable and sustainable. Thus Green marketing is the holistic and responsible strategic management process that identifies, anticipates,

satisfies and fulfils stakeholder needs, for a reasonable reward, that does not adversely affect human or natural environmental well-being.

The term Environmental Marketing (popularly known as Green Marketing) became prominent in the late 1980s and early 1990s beginning in Europe when certain products were identified as harming the earth. Subsequently, new "green" products that were less harmful to the environment were introduced. Green marketing is a phenomenon which has developed in the modern market and has emerged important in India and in other parts of the developing and developed world, being looked upon as an important strategy of empowering sustainable development. Terms like Refillable, Recyclable, Phosphate Free, Ozone Friendly, and Environment Friendly are some of the things consumers most often tend to associate with green marketing. Though these terms may be green marketing claims, in general green marketing is a wider concept, capable of being applied to industrial goods, consumer goods and even services. For an example, there are resorts the world over that are promoting themselves as "ecotourist" facilities, as facilities that "specialize" in experiencing nature or operating having less affect on environment. Thus green marketing encompasses a wide range of activities, including changes to the production process, product modification, packaging changes, as well as modification of advertising. The early definition of green marketing has three key components, such as being a subset of the overall marketing activity; examining the positive and negative processes; and examining narrow ranges of environmental issues.

Importance Of Green Marketing In Any Business

Green marketing offers to businesses a range of bottom-line incentives and top-line growth avenues. The modification of businesses or production processes are likely to involve start-up costs but it will save long run funds. For an example, the installation cost of harvesting solar energy invests for prolonged energy cost savings. Companies, through the development of new and improved products/services keeping in mind environmental impact, gain access to new markets, substantially increase profits and enjoy a greater competitive advantage over those who lack environmentally responsible alternatives.

Five Possible Reasons For Firms To Lean To Green Marketing

1. Organizations look at green marketing to be a tool in the achievement of their own objectives.
2. Organizations believe that it is their moral obligation to be more environmentally and socially responsible.
3. Governmental bodies are pressing firms to become responsible through increased regulations.
4. Competitors' environmental activities pressure firms to change their marketing approaches.
5. Waste disposal costs or material usage reduction forces firms to modify their behavior.

Green Marketing Challenges

Need for Standardization

Green marketing messages are lacking in standardization and observation says that only 5% of the green campaign marketing messages are entirely true. There is no standardization either to authenticate these claims or to certify a product as organic. If some regulatory bodies are involved in providing the certifications it can be verifiable. A standard quality control board put in place for such labeling/ licensing will be beneficial.

New Concept

The Indian consumer, increasingly more literate and urban, is getting more aware about the Green product merits. However it is still a novel concept for the masses. The consumer needs to be educated on environmental threats. It will take a lot of time and effort for the new green movements need to reach the masses. Although, by India's ayurvedic heritage, consumers appreciate the importance of using herbal and natural beauty products. The Indian consumer is exposed to healthy lifestyles such as natural food consumption and yoga. In this way the consumer is already aware and will incline towards acceptance of green products.

Mostly long term returns

The investors and corporate bodies need to look at the environment as a long-term investment opportunity. The marketers need to look at long-term

benefits arising from this new "green" movement. This will require a prolonged patience without immediate results. Being a new concept and idea, it will have its own period of acceptance.

Green Myopia

The first rule of green marketing is its focus on benefits to customers which is the main reason why consumers prefer certain products in the first place. If one does this right, one would motivate consumers to choose brand switching or even pay a higher cost for the green alternative. If an absolute green product is developed but fails the customer satisfaction criteria, it will bring about green myopia.

IMPORTANT TENETS OF GREEN MARKETING

Understand Consumer Psychology: A marketer must ensure of consumer awareness and concern about the issues which the product tries to address.

Consumer Education: It isn't just a matter of letting people what you're doing to protect the environment but in essence a matter of why it is important.

Genuineness and Transparency : It means that the business is not only talk but also doing something about what they claim they are doing.

Consumer Reassurance: Consumers must be reassured that the product does what it's supposed to do as they won't overlook product quality in the goal of environment affordability.

Pricing: While charging a premium for the product (and many environmentally preferable products cost more due to economies of scale and use of higher quality ingredients) make sure that consumers find the premium both affordable and worth it.

Customer participation: It refers to personalization of the benefits of one's environmentally friendly actions, normally by allowing the customer to participate in positive environmental action.

Recognition of Changing Customer Expectations: It is not enough for a company to make its products 'green'; consumers expect the products that they purchase to be both pocket friendly and also help reduce environmental impact not only on the whole but in their own lives too.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development has gained much importance in the last decade. It means the fulfillment of people's needs without environmental destruction. Sustainable development can be seen as a resource use methodology that aims to fulfil human needs while preserving environment resources so that these needs can be fulfilled not only presently, but in the long term future and indefinitely.

The field of sustainable development can be conceptually broken into three constituent parts:

economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and sociopolitical sustainability.

Sustainability tells of a holistic development of human life affecting sustenance. It means resolution of the conflict between various competing goals, involving the pursuit of environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity (more widely known as three dimensions of Sustainability) simultaneously.

Sustainable development has continued to evolve as a protector of the world's resources while its true agenda is to regulate the world's resources. To this end, nowadays one of the important business strategies to ensure sustainable development has taken the form of Green Marketing. Green marketing emerges from societal marketing concept. Green marketing is an attempt to showcase a product as being environmental affable. It is of the view that marketing, as a part of business, must not only satisfy customers of the product, but must also take into account the holistic interests of society. That is, all stakeholders of a business should be kept in mind when the organizational objectives and policies are being set. This has set in motion an increase in the recent trend towards the "greening" of the businesses.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Green marketing offers to businesses a range of bottom-line incentives and top-line growth avenues. The modification of businesses or production processes are likely to involve start-up costs but it will save long run funds. Now is the right time to select Green Marketing on a global level. A drastic change in the business world will come about if all nations will enforce stricter rules being that green marketing is vital to save world from the effects of pollution. From the business viewpoint, a clever

marketer is one who not only convinces the consumer, but also involves him in the marketing of his product. Green marketing should not be considered as just another marketing approach, but has to be pursued much more vigorously, as it occupies an environmental and social dimension as well. With the global warming threat looming large, the onus is that green marketing becomes the norm rather than an exception or much ado about nothing.

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