

Consumer Attitude towards Green Marketing

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Abstract

Attitude of consumers towards the environment constitutes a significant part of environmental consciousness. Attitude has significant influence on buyer decisions, but it appears that buyers do not always base their buying decisions on environment.

Consumers with concern for the Environment are presumed to be more likely to buy green products. This paper presents the result of an empirical study carried out with 100 consumers in India. It reports that consumer have positive attitude towards green marketing. There is no significant variation in this attitude between men and women. Consumers in the age group of 30-34 are more environmental conscious. Higher the education more positive attitude towards green marketing was seen among graduate, doctorates and post-graduates; and lastly Employees in private firms are more concerned about environment followed by unemployed, entrepreneurs and government employees.

Keywords: *Consumer attitudes, Green Marketing, Green washing, Environmental pollution, Environment management, Environmental degradation, Sustainability*

Introduction

Environmental sustainability and economic development can be considered contending imperatives. We as humans have a burning desire for economic growth and prosperity, while at the same time we have a need for the resources the planet provides us. Typically in order to grow our economy it requires that we deplete natural resources such as lumber, oil and minerals by means of deforestation, drilling and mining. It is important for us to realize that if we do not deal with environmental issues right now; the consequences could be devastating not only to ourselves, but to future generations. We are now seeing more and more concern for 'sustainable development' that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Building and nurturing the larger ecosystem around us ensures the success of a corporation. Sustainability is the capacity to endure. For us humans, sustainability is the potential for long-term maintenance of wellbeing that has ecological, economic, and social dimensions.

Healthy ecosystems and environments provide vital goods and services to humans and other organisms. There are two major approaches to reducing negative human impact and enhancing ecosystem services - 'Environment management' and 'Management of human consumption'.

While the first approach is based mainly on information gained from earth science, environmental science and conservation biology, the second approach of managing human consumption of resources is largely based on information gained from economics.

The last two decades have witnessed a progressive increase in worldwide environmental consciousness due to rising evidence of environmental abuse. Environmental protection is increasingly becoming a necessity and part of a bigger agenda in the urbanized world of both developing and developed countries. Given the increasing deterioration of the environment, India, as also all other countries should prevent pollution and preserve its natural resources. Consumers in Asian societies are increasingly becoming conscious to the alarming environmental problems(Harris, 2006). Recently, green consumerism has started to gradually emerge in the Asian regions (Guraçu and Ranchhod, 2005). Asian consumers have recently become one of the primary targets for International green marketers.

Like many Asian countries, India suffers from dangerously high levels of air pollution, poor water quality, high levels of exposure to severe traffic noise, high levels of indiscriminate garbage disposal and rapidly diminishing landfill space.

While resources are scarce and population is growing many folds, human wants are also growing at a rapid pace. It is important for the marketers to utilize the resources efficiently and effectively, causing least deterioration and

degradations to the natural resources in their quest to achieve the organization's goals and objective. Green marketing is now the need of the hour and future.

The obvious assumption of green marketing is that potential consumers will view a product or service's "greenness" as a benefit and base their buying decision accordingly. The not-so-obvious assumption of green marketing is that consumers will be willing to pay more for green products than they would for a less-green comparable alternative product - an assumption that, in our opinion has not been proven conclusively. So, this paper will help us to understand whether the above assumption is correct or incorrect. As consumers are becoming more aware of environmental pollution, conservation of natural resources, and the like, Green marketing is gaining acceptance and growing rapidly. Increasing number of consumers are willing to back their environmental consciousness through their green purchases. The public tends to be sceptical of green claims to begin with, and companies can seriously damage their brands and their sales if a green claim is discovered to be false or contradicted by a company's other products or practices. Presenting a product or service as green when it's not is called *green washing*. Green marketing can be a very powerful marketing strategy, though, when it's done right.

Background and literature survey

Marketers have become increasingly aware in recent years of the impact that company and consumer activities have on natural resources in particular and the environment in

general. Though much of the attention accorded to this predicament of environmental degradation is focused upon business practices, the authors feel that a measure of responsibility lies with the consumers as well, and hence the need to identify the attitude of consumers and create awareness towards green marketing of products and services.

Peattie (1995). 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”

Coddington (1993) defines Green marketing as “marketing activities that recognize environmental stewardship as a business development responsibility and business growth opportunity “.

Polonsky (1994) defines Green marketing as: “all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchange intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs with the minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment”.

According to the American Marketing Association, Green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. Thus, Green marketing incorporates a broad range of activities, including product modification changes to the production process, packaging changes, as well as modifying advertising. Yet defining Green marketing is not a simple

task where several meanings intersect and contradict each other; an example of this will be the existence of varying social, environmental and retail definitions attached to this term. Other similar terms used are Environmental Marketing and Ecological Marketing.

Inglehart (1990) and Buttel (1992) argued that environmental concern is a set of values that develop among wealthy people once their basic needs of food and safety have been met. This statement leads to the prediction that most-consumers of developing countries like India are less environmentally conscious.

Objectives of the study:

Many researches suggest that growing number of consumers in the United States and Western Europe are becoming more environmentally conscious. However, this might not be said about India, a country with several environmental issues. It remains to be known if Indian consumers are environmentally conscious in their buying decisions and if they understand as well as accept the concept of 'Green marketing.'

It is in this background the present study is undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To know the attitude of Indian consumers towards Green Marketing.
2. To check whether Indian consumers are ready to pay premium for green products.

Methodology

Sample

The validity of any research is based on the systematic method of data collection and analysis. Primary data was used for the present study. The primary data was collected from 100 sample respondents from the cities of Mysore and Mangalore, Karnataka state. For collecting the first-hand information from the respondents, one hundred of them were chosen by convenience sampling method. This type of sampling is one of the types of non-probability sampling which involves the sample being drawn from that part of the population that is close at hand. That is, a sample population selected because it is readily available and convenient. Each respondent was individually contacted in the two cities, and, after obtaining consent from them the questionnaire was administered to them in one sitting.

Tool for data collection and analysis

Questionnaire was the main tool used to collect the pertinent data from the selected sample respondents. For this purpose, a well structured questionnaire was framed with the help of research expert. The questionnaire had high face and content validity. Field survey method was employed to collect the primary data from the selected sample respondents. An attempt was also made to maintain interest and cooperation throughout the testing session. The participants were given assurance about the confidentiality of obtained information. They were informed to cooperate throughout the study and if at

all they felt discomfort during the sessions or in answering questions they had option to opt out from the investigation. Statistical methods like percentages, chi-square test and One-way ANOVA were employed in the present study, using SPSS for windows software.

RESULT:

Table 1 : Descriptive statistics for scores on consumer attitude towards Green marketing by gender, age groups, education, occupation, and income levels and results of 't' test and F tests

Variable		Mean	S.D	Test statistics	Significance
Total		3.46	0.25	t=60.53	.000 ^s
Gender	Male	3.49	0.27	t=1.396	.166 ^{NS}
	Female	3.42	0.23		
Age groups (in years)	Below 20	3.25	0.08	F=1.206	.313 ^{NS}
	20-24	3.45	0.29		
	25-29	3.50	0.22		
	30-34	3.56	0.23		
	35+	3.43	0.21		
Education	Matriculation	3.38	0.25	F= 1.052	.385 ^{NS}
	Under-graduate	3.57	0.43		
	Graduate,	3.47	0.19		
	Post graduate	3.47	0.26		
	Doctorate	3.54	0.47		

Occupation	Unemployed	3.38	0.22	F= 2.905	.039 ^s
	Government	3.54	0.28		
	Entrepreneur	3.39	0.26		
	Private sector	3.52	0.24		
Income per annum	>50000	3.40	0.21	F=1.322	.267 ^{NS}
	50000-150000	3.45	0.30		
	150000-250000	3.53	0.20		
	250000-350000	3.38	0.21		
	Above 350000	3.51	0.34		

On the expected level of 5.00 for most favourable attitude, the mean attitude scores was 3.46. When one sample t test was applied, t value of 60.53 was observed with the significance level of .000. In other words, the selected sample had significantly less favourable attitude towards GREEN marketing.

Influence of gender: A non-significant difference was observed between male and female respondents in their attitude towards green marketing as the obtained 't' value of 1.396 was found to be non-significant (P=.166). The mean scores of male and female respondents were 3.49 and 3.42 respectively, which are statistically the same.

Influence age: One way ANOVA revealed a non-significant influence of age over consumer attitude scores. The obtained F value of 1.206 was found to be statistically

non-significant ($P=.313$). The mean attitude scores of respondents belonging to different age groups-below 20, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34 and above 35 years were 3.25, 3.45, 3.50, 3.56 and 3.43 respectively, which were statistically same.

Influence of education: Education level of the respondents did not have significant influence over attitude scores, where F value of 1.052 was found to be non-significant ($P=0.385$). Mean values clearly revealed that respondents with matriculation, under graduation, graduation, post graduation and doctorate degrees had mean attitude scores of 3.38, 3.57, 3.47, 3.47 and 3.54 respectively.

Influence of occupation: One-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in the mean attitude scores of respondents belonging to different occupations ($F=2.905$ $P=.039$). Those who were working in private and government sectors had highest scores (means 3.52 and 3.54 respectively), followed by unemployed (mean 3.38) and entrepreneurs had least scores (mean 3.39).

Influence of Income: Income level of respondents did not have significant influence over mean attitude scores ($F=1.322$; $P=.267$). The mean attitude scores of the respondents with <50000, 50000-150000, 150000-250000, 250000-350000 and 350000 were 3.40, 3.45, 3.53, 3.38 and 3.51 respectively, which were statistically same.

Findings:

- Consumer attitude towards green marketing is not favourable.

- Employees in private and government sectors were more positive towards Green marketing compared to unemployed and entrepreneurs.
- Gender-wise, age wise, income wise and education wise no differences were observed for mean attitude scores.

Conclusions:

In general, Green marketing still has a long way to go in both research and practice. The social desirability of effective persuasion techniques fostering widespread environmentally responsible behavior is unquestionable. Probably one of the most critical issues in Green marketing is the reduced individual benefit perceived by most consumers. Thus, the challenge for Green marketers is to increase the perception of individual benefits by adding emotional value to green brands, and this challenge will be even more so in the future.

Perhaps the answer to making more substantive progress towards sustainability does not lie with marketers alone, but also consumers that should be aware about environment. The longer we take to address the issue, and to make progress towards more sustainable marketing, the greater the disruption and effort will be. The sooner substantive progress is made, the more likely the story will have a happy ending. This present article help us better understand consumers' level of concern about the environment, to develop effective plans required to achieve sustainability and reinforce green purchase through effective marketing activities. Moreover, companies will

have insight about how to profile green consumers in India, and better develop green marketing messages that will functionally and emotionally appeal to their target customers.

Ultimately green marketing requires that consumers want a cleaner environment and are willing to “pay” for it, possibly through higher priced goods, modified individual lifestyles, or even governmental intervention. Until this occurs it will be difficult for firms alone to lead the green marketing revolution.

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