Awareness of Green Marketing and Its Influence on Buying Behavior of Consumers

*Ashok kumar Parsoya

Student M.Com university of Rajasthan Jaipur

ABSRACT

Customer’s attitudes are changing towards the environment to encourage innovation for conservation and the benefits from this source of innovation are certain to outlive our current generation. This paper investigates consumer beliefs and attitude on environment protection and their purchasing behavior of eco-friendly products. This paper also focuses on the success of efforts put by marketers in bringing green brands awareness in consumer’s mind. It further reviews consumer behavior and impact of marketing communication to identify how consumers are persuaded to opt for greener products. It reports the results of a consumer product survey using a questionnaire based on the Dunlap and Van Liere HEP-NEP environmental survey and the Roper Starch Worldwide environmental behavior survey. This paper identifies that consumers are not exposed enough to green product marketing communication and suggests the greater use of marketing and brands to promote and sell products that are environmentally friendly and function effectively. The paper suggests that the Indian market for greener products could be exploited more within consumer groups that have pro environmental values.

Keywords: Green marketing, Customer’s Belief and Trust, Consumer’s awareness, Green Brands, HEP-NEP environmental survey

1. Introduction

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 color 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 their product 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 behavior) 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.
2. Environmentally Sustainable Products

Defining environmentally sustainable products is complex. In a strict sense, there is no such thing as a truly sustainable or green product, as all products we buy, own, use and discard in our everyday lives will have negative environmental impacts at some stage in their lifecycles. However, products can be classified according to the scale of these impacts, and a quality threshold can be drawn (Cooper, 2000). If a product has a low environmental impact, it is regarded as an environmentally sustainable product. Another definition of an environmentally sustainable product, for consideration in this paper, is that products should be readily available for purchase and include those supplied by companies with a reputation for reducing environmental impacts from their manufacturing processes.

3. Literature Review

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

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 energy efficient 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.

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.

4. Research Objectives

➢ Consumer beliefs and attitudes on green products.
➢ Consumer awareness on the availability of environmentally friendly products.
➢ The influence of marketing efforts put by marketers with reference to Consumers.

5. Research Methodology

In order to investigate the research objectives, both secondary and primary 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 eco-marketing 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 India.

6. Conclusion

Given India’s rapid GDP growth rate and the highly negative environmental impact, demand for eco-labeled products may create the necessary consumer pressure to ensure a cleaner environment. This study confirms the existence of an environmental value-
action gap, a gap between consumers’ beliefs and behaviors over being green. This paper has highlighted various aspects of consumer behavior and shown that consumer preference for greener goods could be influenced by marketing. Products given greater exposure will be more likely to sell in greater numbers. Pro-environmental values are more likely to result in more pro-environmental behavior when values and beliefs are specific enough, the green action aligns with consumers’ subjective interests, and product attributes are positively perceived. A major barrier in the purchasing of green products is: concern over whether the product will perform as expected. However, consumers generally trust the performance of well known brands, so green products that work well and do not make over inflated green claims could sell successfully under well-known brands. The current low levels of consumer awareness about global warming, India’s brands need to help raise consumer consciousness. Indian manufacturers have yet to find a market for green products, even as consumers have a low awareness of them because of the insufficient efforts made by the marketers. But by embracing the green imperative, and investing in green initiatives and consumer education, Indian brands can break this vicious cycle. Overall, it is clear that the Indian market for greener products is under-exploitation by marketers within consumer groups with pro-environmental values. This finding suggests the there is greater use of marketing brands to sell green products that are genuinely environmentally friendly.

References

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