

Green Consciousness of Consumers

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Abstract—Global enlightenment has expanded about the environmental stresses humans are placing on the planet. Many consumers now display concern about environmental deterioration. This is the major impetus for green products and green marketing. However, green is a relative term and depends on the individual. Green marketing refers to the process of selling products and/or services based on their environmental benefits. Such a product or service may be environmentally friendly in itself or produced and / or packaged in an environmentally friendly way. The American Marketing Association (AMA) held the first workshop on "Ecological Marketing" in 1975. The proceedings of this workshop resulted in one of the first books on green marketing entitled "Ecological Marketing". This paper has focused and tried to understand awareness level of green products, Consumers perception about green products.

Keywords: Green Products, Green Marketing, Green Marketing Mix, Responsibility, Awareness

1. INTRODUCTION

Green marketing is defined as "Green or Environmental Marketing consists of 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." This definition incorporates much of the traditional components of the marketing definition that is "All activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants". Therefore it ensures that the interests of the organization and all its consumers are protected, as voluntary exchange will not take place unless both the buyer and seller mutually benefit. 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 my opinion, has not been proven conclusively. This green marketing approach is largely used as a gimmick by the gigantic corporate houses in order to make a difference in the consumer's point of view when it comes to major market decisions. Many firms are beginning to realize that they are members of the wider community and therefore must behave in an environmentally responsible fashion. So

green marketing is also a way of looking at how marketing activities can make the best use of these limited resources while meeting corporate objectives. Thus an environmental committed organization may not only produce goods that have reduced their detrimental impact on the environment, they may also be able to pressure their suppliers to behave in a more environmentally "responsible" fashion. Final consumers and industrial buyers also have the ability to pressure organizations to integrate the environment into their corporate culture and thus ensure all organizations minimize the detrimental environmental impact of their activities. With the human wants escalating heavily, the resources are decreasing. Hence it has become mandatory for the marketers across the globe to use the resources efficiently and not waste them under any circumstances. Worldwide surveys indicate that consumers globally are changing their behaviour towards products and services. Green marketing is almost inevitable as the market for socially responsible products is increasing greatly.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ON GREEN CONSCIOUSNESS

2.1 Green Marketing - Insights

Vijay Jain (2010) summarized the three C's process for green marketing implementation as Consumer Value Positioning, Calibration of Consumer Knowledge and Credibility of product. **Artee Aggrawal (2010)** outlined that Eco-responsible (Green) organizations have a tough task to optimise their product offering mix in such a way so that they can not only attract customer towards them but also can have their products price competitive. **Ramakishen (2010)** understood that the factors for going green as Goodwill, Differentiation, Competition, Pressure Groups, Government Pressure, Customer Demand, New Market Entry. The study by **Vinay (2011)** determined that the concept of green marketing has been around at least since the first earth day in 1970. But the idea did not catch on till 1980's, when rising public interest in the environment led to a demand for more green products and services. The companies like Wipro, HCL, TNPL, IBM, ONGC etc., implemented the concept of green marketing in their organization. The study by **Nandini Deshpande (2011)** has pointed out that Green Marketing should not neglect the economic aspect of marketing.

Marketers need to understand the implications of Green Marketing. Thus Green Marketing is a golden goose, and can be a very powerful marketing strategy though when it is done right. The study conducted by **Sourabh Bhattacharya (2011)** states that the green marketers in India should carry out heavy promotional campaigns, because majority of the Indian consumers are price-sensitive and are not sure about the quality of green products. **Gurmeet (2013)** identifies a broad range of activities incorporated under green marketing, including several that marketers should be aware of, such as product and advertising modification, as well as changes to the production process, and packaging.

3. EVOLUTION OF GREEN MARKETING

The American Marketing Association (AMA) held the first workshop on “*Ecological Marketing*” in 1975. The proceedings of this workshop resulted in one of the first books on green marketing entitled “*Ecological Marketing*” (**Henion and Kinnear, 1976**). Since that time a number of other books on the topic have been published (**Charter and Polonsky, 1999; Coddington, 1993; Ottman, 1994**). The AMA workshop attempted to bring together academics, practitioners, and public policy makers to examine marketing’s impact on the natural environment. This workshop defined ecological marketing as - the study of the positive and negative aspects of marketing activities on pollution, energy depletion and non-energy resource depletion (**Henion and Kinnear, 1976**)

This early definition has three key components:

- a. It is a subset of the overall marketing activity;
- b. It examines both the positive and negative activities; and
- c. A narrow range of environmental issues is examined.

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. Indeed the terminology used in this area has varied; it includes Green Marketing, Environmental Marketing and Ecological Marketing. In fact, green marketing is a kind of marketing focused on the condition of the earth and the human life too. So, it teaches us to manage the marketing process for satisfying the needs, wants and demands of customers and society in a both profitable and environmentally sustainable way. While conventional marketing entails developing products that meet consumers’ needs at affordable prices and then communicating the benefits of those products in a compelling way but environmental marketing is more complex. It serves two key objectives:

- To develop products that balance consumers’ needs for quality, performance, affordable pricing, and convenience with environmental compatibility, that is, minimal impact on the environment
- To project an image of high quality, including environmental sensitivity, relating to both a product’s

attributes and its manufacturer’s track record for environmental achievement.

Nevertheless, as these objectives cannot be met by using conventional marketing strategies therefore marketers in the age of environmental consumerism are accountable to tough new standards.

4. HISTORY OF GREEN MARKETING ABROAD

Man’s concern for natural environment has always been there but his serious concern about the issues of resource depletion and degrading environment /ecosystem began after World War II when industrialization started vigorously. However, nothing tangible was done to control damage afflicted to environment till 1960’s. The governments in 1960’s especially in developed countries were undergoing a social change; later such change also started in developing countries. The social change raised aspirations and hopes of people for improvement in quality of human life and living standards, which in turn opened up numerous issues relating to development, sustainable development, economic growth and consumerism; all issues being linked to environment. Soon, people recognized that environment was deteriorating and the natural resources were depleting due to developmental activities. The earth’s physical and biological system came under great strain.

As the concern for environmental problems increased, the governments institutionalized the environmental issues through new legislations and regulations. International agencies swung into action. More comprehensive laws were enacted at national and local levels and new agencies established to make sure the compliance aspects by public in general and business and industry in particular.

In the early decades, industry, trade and business resisted efforts aimed at environmental protection and resource conservation because money spent on such efforts would minimize profits. However, the attitude has been changing not because of legal actions only but also due to realization that cutting down on raw material and generating less waste could be a financial gain. Also, there was an international angle to environment, which could not be ignored. It became clear that problems concerning Ozone depletion or global warming could not be tackled at national level alone. Leaders, politicians and people in general, therefore started looking up at organizations like United Nations (UN) for environmental issues. Some of them are given below -

- United Nation’s Conference on Human Environment, 1972
- General Assembly’s Resolution of December, 1972
- Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, 1974
- Environment Education Conference
- World Commission on Environment and Development
- Earth Summit 1992
- Rio Declaration
- Earth Summit +5
- Earth Summit 2002-Johannesburg Summit

- The Montreal Protocol (1987)
- Kyoto Protocol (1997)

5. THE GREEN MARKETING MIX

We are quite acquainted with the term marketing mix. The study of green marketing is incomplete without knowing "*The Green Marketing Mix*". **Culliton (1948)** said that a marketing decision should be a result of something similar to a recipe. **Borden (1964)** later coined the term '*Marketing-Mix*'. This checklist offers a useful tool to analyze the status of any marketing situation. For generations, marketing students have been taught to use the marketing mix in creating market plans. According to **Bradley (1989)**, the green marketing mix consists of components such as price, product, package, promotion, distribution, and advertising.

In case of price, various factors like whether the price charged for the product is being used for a worthy cause, whether price cover the real cost of production, or do customer feel exploited, whether suppliers perceived to receive a fair share of profits etc. Parameters like hidden costs and elasticity of demand and its effect on the consumption of the product needs to be considered.

In case of product, it needs to be checked whether the product is environmental friendly, whether it is operator / user friendly. The major concern like the environment should not suffer while producing it must be taken care of. No animal or human should suffer while producing it and its use should not harm the consumer directly or indirectly. Certain issues must be considered like: Is the name of the product green? Can it be recycled / reused? Is it greener than its competitors? Is the consumption of the product unnecessarily high? All these issues must be considered while dealing with the product as apart of green marketing mix.

In case of packaging, issues like - the packaging should be perceived to be environmentally safe, it should be biodegradable, it can be reused or recycled, it should be safe to handle and its disposal must be considered. Some of the questions, which must be addressed to, are: Is packaging necessary at all? Is it green at point of sale? Is it functional and do it lead to waste / over use?

In case of promotion, the claims for the product / service should be honest. Promotion should contain information on the supplier's positive contribution to the society. The promotion should have the ability to position the product as '*green*'. In case of distribution the organizations must ensure that their distributors are green and will associate responsibility with the product. The contribution of the distributors to the society and how they can help the society must be determined. Creation of '*green*' SWOT reports on the distributors network must be carried out and, as far as possible, direct selling must be preferred.

In case of advertising the claims must be honest, truthful, decent and not misleading. Welcome opportunities to focus on

green aspects like charities, ozone friendly etc. Avoid using comparative advertising as pulling down the competitors can also throw doubt over your product. In media selection, green media like radio and television must be used.

6. GREEN PRODUCTS

Green products are mostly credence goods (**Nelson 1974 and Reinhardt 1998**). Their environmental superiority in comparison to competitors' goods can usually not be identified by customers. An organic apple does not necessarily taste better, CFC-free refrigerators do not cool better and the solar power that supplies television is not painted green. Thus, customers have to trust what the suppliers offer. Green products are those products that can be made safer for the environment in a variety of ways, like reduction in the quantity of waste created, materials used and energy consumed during a product's life span. According to **Simon (1992)**, the characteristics of green products are:

- i. They consists of recyclable material,
- ii. They are non-toxic,
- iii. Use little packaging,
- iv. Reusable
- v. Long life,
- vi. Have no impact on animals.

But trusting companies in green issue is not self-evident (**Coddington, 1993**). Companies that tried to block environmental improvements in the past mostly had problems when trying to sell green products later. While creating a special image is a long-term process, changing a negative environmental image into a positive one lasts even longer.

7. GREEN CONSUMERS

In conventional marketing, demographics are often a key determinant of willingness to buy specific products. But in green marketing, willingness to purchase environmentally friendly products – are not only determined by demographics but also by the consumers' feelings of being able to act on these issues. That is thinking of environment friendly products is not enough, one must buy it and use it. After all, consumers may be concerned about a specific issue like fumes emanating from the local power plant or protecting a local wildlife sanctuary and have the time or money to act - but if they do not believe they can make a difference, they will likely not act. Thus awareness alone is not enough, willingness to act to protect the environment is important.

Research has shown that the most accurate predictor of individuals willing to pay a premium for Green Product was not education or income, but membership in or prior contributions to environmental groups (**Ottman, 1997**). Supporters of such utility "*green pricing*" programs are "*surprisingly diverse, including both urban professionals and rural families.*"

8. THE IMPORTANCE OF GREEN MARKETING

Mankind has limited resources on the earth, with which he/she must attempt to provide for the worlds' unlimited wants. In market societies where there is "*freedom of choice*", it has generally been accepted that individuals and organizations have the right to attempt to have their wants satisfied. As firms face limited natural resources, they must develop new or alternative ways of satisfying these unlimited wants. Ultimately green marketing looks at how marketing activities utilize these limited resources, while satisfying consumers wants, both of individuals and industry, as well as achieving the selling organization's objectives.

9. REASONS FOR USING GREEN MARKETING

There are reasons for organizations increased use of Green Marketing. Five possible reasons could be: -

- Governmental bodies are forcing firms to become more responsible
- Organizations see green marketing as an opportunity that can be used to earn profits.
- Organizations feel that they have a moral obligation to be more socially responsible.
- Competitors' environmental activities pressurize firms to change their environmental marketing activities and
- Cost factors associated with waste disposal or reductions in material usage forces firms to modify their behavior.

McDonald's replaced its clam shell packaging with waxed paper because of increased consumer concern relating to polystyrene production and Ozone depletion. Xerox introduced a "*high quality*" recycled photocopier paper in an attempt to satisfy the demands of firms for less environmentally harmful products.

This is not to imply that all firms who have undertaken environmental marketing activities actually improve their behavior. In some cases, firms have misled consumers in an attempt to gain market share. In other cases, firms have jumped on the green bandwagon without considering the accuracy of their behavior, their claims, or the effectiveness of their products. This lack of consideration of the true "*greenness*" of activities may result in firms making false or misleading green marketing claims.

10. ASCENDING TIDE OF GLOBAL GREEN MARKETING

The green movement has been expanding rapidly in the United States and the United Kingdom. Consumers in those countries are taking responsibility and doing the right thing. Consumer awareness and motivation continue to drive change in the marketplace—notably through the introduction of more energy-saving and eco friendly products.¹

Compared to consumers in the U.S. and U.K., the Indian consumer has much less awareness of global warming issues.

Initiatives from industry and the government are still ice blue. Although India is one of the lowest-intensity producers of CO₂ among major countries, its CO₂ emissions increased 57 percent between 1992 and 2002.² But today few Indians think about these issues. Most are content to move along the economic escalator without giving a lot of thought to their environmental footprints.

Currently, middle- and upper-class citizens are the most environmentally concerned segment of the Indian population. The lower classes are still struggling to survive, and for them price and convenience, not eco friendliness, are their chief considerations. India's nouveau riche, meanwhile, are too busy spending their newfound wealth to worry about social responsibility. And the wealthy, for their part, are mostly indifferent.

But there are signs of increasing receptiveness to going green. A Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2007 revealed that up to 65 percent of Indians are very concerned about global warming, compared to 26 percent of Brits, 20 percent of Chinese, and 19 percent of Americans. Apparently Indian consumers want to do the right thing but they don't know what or how. Green products are not clearly labeled in Indian supermarkets today, and there aren't a lot of ad campaigns touting green options.

Nevertheless, a viable green movement is emerging in the country. This is largely because green is already a force to be reckoned with in the West and because it is beginning to make business sense for Indians. But there are also social factors contributing to a penchant for green. Indians did not experience the joys of consumerism until very recently, so they have a natural inclination to be thrifty and value conscious. But there is still a long way to go.

India is expected to be the world's third largest economy by 2030. The country's youth will be at the vanguard of the country's green movement. Aware, conscious, motivated, and knowledgeable about eco conscious trends in the rest of the world, they will be among the first to stand up and take notice of green brands.

11. INDIAN CONSUMERS GO GREEN

Indian consumer is increasingly getting conscious about using environment friendly products. According to the survey, making green choices is a high priority for around 60 per cent of Indian consumers. And 95 per cent of consumers who make green choices claim to do so to protect the environment. A study revealed that the number of consumers willing to switch to using green products and services is increasing and will continue to increase over the coming years.

Indian consumers' attitude towards green practices, products and services across, mainly, in three sectors that are energy, retail and transport. It also rates different consumer segments by assigning them green scores, based on their level of adoption of green behavior across these sectors. Over 85 per

cent of consumers in the country consider human activities to be the primary factor driving climate change, and more than half say that air pollution is their primary environmental concern. Over half the consumers feel that India's automotive industry has the greatest potential to make an impact on the environment by reducing carbon emissions. Women and urban dwellers are more inclined towards adopting green behavior across the three sectors as compared to men and the rural population. It also predicts that consumers in the 35-54 years age group will be surpass other age groups in adoption of green practices across the three sectors.

As per the Datamonitor Green Scores, India scores higher than most Asia Pacific countries except China. Since, the Chinese consumers adopt green practices such as buying environment-friendly cars and using green energy at home more willingly as compared to Indians. India's confidence in green products being better for the environment (85 percent) is higher than other countries surveyed by DuPont in previous years. Previous studies showed China with 70 percent confidence, Canada with 65 percent and the United States with 60 percent.

Regionally, familiarity of green products was found to be highest in South (83 percent) and East (68 percent), followed by West (42 percent) and North (53 percent). Consumers from South India also are most confident (95 percent) that green products are better for the environment. Awareness of green products is high across the country, with younger consumers below age 30 showing the highest level of familiarity (69 percent) followed by ages 51+ (60 percent) and ages 31-50 (58 percent). Since nearly 50 percent of India's current population is below the age of 25, there is strong potential for green product adoption and demand growth. Currently, more than two-thirds (67 percent) of consumers are likely to purchase apparel, personal care, hygiene and household products made from bio-based ingredients that offer environmental benefits.

India therefore, seems to have a large potential for green products and services. Competitive pricing and targeted marketing campaigns are expected to drive the growth of the market. Green is slowly and steadily becoming the symbolic colour of eco consciousness in India. Every brand will have to become green to some extent or risk becoming irrelevant in a world where the response to climate change is critical to the survival of future generations. There are numbers of ways that brand can tap into the power of green and achieve greater relevance for environmentally conscious consumers.

Many Indian brands have taken on the green challenge by aligning themselves with a green cause, by introducing green products, by taking steps to reduce energy consumption and reduce costs, and by embracing green as a business imperative. Here are a few examples: The International Indian Film Academy hosts international events as a way of championing a green response to global warming. India's largest tire company, MRF, has recently launched a new tubeless, ecofriendly rubber tire that reduces rolling resistance and results in lower fuel consumption.

Bajaj Auto has installed wind power generation units in three factories that not only conserve energy but also save Rs 25 crore in power costs each year. (Rs 25 crore is approximately \$5.9 million USD or €3.7 million.) The Orchid Ecotel Hotel-Asia's first eco friendly five-star hotel chain, is conserving natural resources without compromising quality of service. Nevertheless, a viable green movement is emerging in the country. This is largely because green is already a force to be reckoned with in the West and because it is beginning to make business sense for Indians. But there are also social factors contributing to a penchant for green. Indians did not experience the joys of consumerism until very recently, so they have a natural inclination to be thrifty and value conscious. But there is still a long way to go.

India is expected to be the world's third largest economy by 2030. The country's youth will be at the vanguard of the country's green movement. Aware, conscious, motivated, and knowledgeable about eco conscious trends in the rest of the world, they will be among the first to stand up and take notice of green brands.

12. MILESTONES FOR INDIA'S GREEN BRANDS

Given the present low levels of consumer awareness about global warming, India's brands need to help raise consumer consciousness. Indian manufacturers have still to find a market for green products, even as consumers have a low awareness of them because so few are available. But by embracing the green imperative, and investing in green initiatives and consumer education, Indian brands can break this vicious cycle.

India's largest private bank, ICICI, in conjunction with the Bombay Natural History Society, an NGO, has launched a "Go Green" tree-planting initiative in Mumbai. ICICI asks its customers to sign up for paperless bank statements, and the bank plants a tree for each complying customer. Number of well-known premium ayurvedic skin and hair care brand, uses traditional production methods in manufacturing and encourages local suppliers to boost employment. No animals are used for product testing, nor does the company use child labor. All of the company's products are manufactured in small Himalayan villages, using local labor. Wipro recently unveiled a new range of green PCs as part of its GreenWare initiative. Though the company incurred additional costs in manufacturing these products, it chose not to charge a premium to customers as a way of encouraging them to use the eco friendly products.

Green initiatives that trickle down from the top and then permeate your entire organization will strengthen your company's socially conscious stance. The ITC (previously called the Imperial Tobacco Company of India), whose product portfolio extends from faster moving consumer goods to hospitality, has adopted the social mantra, and taken up many green initiatives. In still another example of embracing the green imperative, GE has created a green laboratory, Eco

imagination, within its organization to build solutions to today's environmental challenges. The company has doubled investment in cleaner, greener R&D and plans to increase revenue from products emerging from these solutions

In India consumers are extremely cost conscious, they are less willing to pay extra for green products. Innovation will clearly have to remain price sensitive. Sustainable innovations that focus on cost efficiencies and that can be translated into comparably priced (or less expensive) products will be most successful. The time to go green is now. Whether you choose to align your brand with a green initiative, support a green mandate, drive green innovation, or completely embrace the green imperative, the important thing is to strike while the market is still searching for green leadership. The first brands that sign up to the green challenge will be seen by consumers as visionary, caring, and responsible. Positioned as green leaders, they will find themselves at a competitive advantage when the green movement overtakes India.

13. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Many firms are beginning to realize that they are members of the wider community and therefore must behave in an environmentally responsible fashion. This translates into firms that believe they must achieve environmental objectives as well as profit related objectives. This results in environmental issues being integrated into the firm's corporate culture. Firms in this situation can take two perspectives;

- 1) They can use the fact that they are environmentally responsible as a marketing tool;
- 2) They can become responsible without promoting this fact.

There are examples of firms adopting both strategies. Organizations like the Body Shop heavily promote the fact that they are environmentally responsible. While this behavior is a competitive advantage, the firm was established specifically to offer consumers environmentally responsible alternatives to conventional cosmetic products. This philosophy is directly tied to the overall corporate culture, rather than simply being a competitive tool. An example of a firm that does not promote its environmental initiatives is Coca-Cola. They have invested large sums of money in various recycling activities, as well as having modified their packaging to minimize its environmental impact. While being concerned about the environment, Coke has not used this concern as a marketing tool. Thus many consumers may not realize that Coke is a very environmentally committed organization. Another firm who is very environmentally responsible but does not promote this fact, at least outside the organization, is Walt Disney World (WDW). WDW has an extensive waste management program and infrastructure in place, yet these facilities are not highlighted in their general tourist promotional activities.

14. GOVERNMENTAL PRESSURE

As with all marketing related activities, governments want to "protect" consumers and society; this protection has significant green marketing implications. Governmental regulations relating to environmental marketing are designed to protect consumers in several ways,

- a) Reduce production of harmful goods or by-products;
- b) Modify consumer and industry's use and/or consumption of harmful goods; or
- c) Ensure that all types of consumers have the ability to evaluate the environmental composition of goods.

Governments establish regulations designed to control the amount of hazardous wastes produced by firms. Many by-products of production are controlled through the issuing of various environmental licenses, thus modifying organizational behavior. In some cases, governments try to "induce" final consumers to become more responsible. For example, some governments have introduced voluntary recycling programs, making it easier for consumers to act responsibly. In other cases, governments tax individuals who act in an irresponsible fashion.

There is a positive relationship between Green consumer attitude and Green consumer behavior. This brings a new green younger consumer segment of products in the market where Green attitude guides green behavior. This is very important to keep environment safe and worth living. Thus manufacturers and consumers together can eliminate environmental stress associated and simultaneously preserving the benefits it offers.

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