

Green Marketing: How Green Are today's Youth

Gaurav Sehrawat

Department of Commerce, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, India

Abstract

In the light of current emphasis on the environmental concerns, one wonders to what extent does a consumer contemplates about the impact of his consumption on the environment. Most green marketing literature is strongly based on the assumption that a consumer's environmental awareness is a pre-condition for green purchasing. While following such a 'behaviouristic' green marketing both scholars and companies seem to have neglected that green products are bought only if customers perceive the products as superior to competitors' offerings. This paper focus on the youth (Digital people), that how green is today's youth and there valuable input to green marketing. This tech-savvy generation (also known as Millennials) grew up with computers and the Internet and their ability to express opinions through online consumer forum, blogging, and social networking, they are capable of gathering immediate responses from millions around the world Though many consumers are aware of the impact of various chemicals on the environment and although "of late consumers have also become concerned with environmental problems and started demanding eco-friendly products especially in developed countries" (Jain & Kaur, 2004, p. 187), yet there seems to be no conclusive evidence of consumer awareness in India.

KEYWORDS: Green Marketing, Youth, Green Product, Environmental Concerns, Marketing Strategies.

Introduction

In the light of current emphasis on the environmental concerns, one wonders to what extent does a consumer contemplates about the impact of his consumption on the environment. Since India faces other serious problems like overpopulation , unemployment, illiteracy, poverty ,unequal distribution of income, lack of transportation facilities and health-care facilities, people barely think of engaging in environmental activism and fight against environmental degradation. Though there has been increase in environmental alertness and awareness in India after Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984), collective efforts were lacking to combat the effects of environmental damage by the business community.

In this reference one of the recent movement that has taken place is Green Marketing. This movement is "largely concerned with those industries with the most severe environmental impacts, and with developing new technologies to alleviate particular environmental problems" (Baker, 2003, p. 721). However, the term Green Marketing came into prominence in 1980- 1990, the American Marketing Association (AMA) held the first workshop on "Ecological Marketing" in 1975 were published as one of the first books on green marketing entitled "Ecological Marketing".

The concept Green marketing refers to the marketing of products that are considered to be environmentally safe. Thus green marketing necessitates product modifications, changes to the production process and packaging changes.

Thus "Green Marketing" refers to holistic marketing concept wherein the production, marketing consumption and disposal of products and services happen in a manner that is less detrimental to the environment.

With growing awareness about the implications of global warming, non-biodegradable solid waste, harmful impact of pollutants etc., both marketers and consumers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the need for switch in to green products and services.

It has also been "alternatively known as environmental marketing and sustainable marketing" (Jain & Kaur, 2004, p. 188) that is "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". In order to become 'Green' an industry can opt any one of the following three ways: "value-addition processes, management systems and products." (Prakash, 2002, p. 286).

Those consumers who prefer these green products are called as Green Consumers.

Ellington (1994: 93) defines green consumer as one who avoids products that are likely to endanger the health of the consumer or others; cause significant damage to the environment during manufacture, use or disposal; consume a disproportionate amount of energy; cause unnecessary waste; use materials derived from threatened species or environments; involve unnecessary use of, or cruelty to animals; adversely affect other countries.

There is growing interest among the consumers all over the world regarding the protection of the environment. With rising consciousness about the implications of global warming, non-biodegradable solid waste, harmful impact of pollutants etc., both marketers and consumers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the need for switch in to green products and services.

There are factors responsible for the growth of green consumerism include heightened awareness of green issues among people often as a result of media coverage; emergence of an increasing number of green substitutes to traditional products; widespread use of green themes in advertising; a shift in values towards concern for environment and society.

There are many misconceptions about Green Products that hurt the hopes for green products like that "such products are of lower quality or don't really deliver on their environmental promises" (Bloom, 2004, p. 79). On the other hand Green products like organic foods and energy-efficient appliances thus appeal to consumers' interests and these consumers realize that they will actually save money on energy and water bills over the long term. Even some consumers are willing to pay premium for energy-efficient, water-conserving washer and dryer units.

Worldwide evidence indicates people are concerned about the environment and are changing their behaviour. As a result of this, green marketing has emerged which speaks for the growing market for sustainable and socially responsible products and services. Even though "consumers in developed countries are in general more aware

of ecological issues and they show greater environmental concern as they are already paying a heavy toll on account of environmental degradation that has occurred during the seventies and eighties due to rapid industrialization and development of their economies” (Jain & Kaur, 2004, p. 200), yet even in the developing countries consumers are showing a greater concern and activism about the environment but there is still not much of awareness about these in the developing countries like ours.

Green Consumer

The green consumer is generally defined as one who adopts environmentally friendly behaviours and/or who purchases green products over the standard alternatives. Green consumers are more internally-controlled as they believe that an individual consumer can be effective in environmental protection. Thus, they feel that the job of environmental protection should not be left to the government, business, environmentalists and scientists only; they as consumers can also play a part. They are also less dogmatic and more open-minded or tolerant toward new products and ideas. Their open-mindedness helps them to accept green products and behaviours, more readily (Shamdasani et al. 1993:491).

According to the consumption report of the EU (Consumers in Europe), it is found that ten percent of the consumers recognize the ecological product labels or green energy labels on the products sold in the supermarkets. Although the companies in our country progress with significant speed in terms of the environment, it is not possible yet for us to say that they have reached the same level regarding consumer sensitivity. In Western implementations, environmental awareness and the “green policy” in business organizations are reflected in the business as result of the environmental awareness of the consumers. The most recent and classical example regarding this subject is airline transportation industry. In airline transportation, large amount of carbon emission released by the planes into the environment is a matter in question. British Airway offers the following “relieving” solution to people who have to travel by plane but feel disturbed due to the carbon emission: to give financial support to a fund providing researches intended to reduce carbon emission. The carbon emission, released during the distance covered is calculated and a contribution of 12.08 Euro per ton can be paid per person. Carbon dioxide emission per one passenger during an Istanbul-London flight reaches 29 kilograms, and with this fund, which was established on a voluntary basis, environmentally conscious passengers can donate 3.25 Euro and feel relaxed. On the other hand,

Turkish Airlines has stated “we achieved fuel savings and this saving reduced carbon emission” in a statement they made in October, demonstrating that the firm has a more low profile “temporary” approach (Natural haber, 2010).

Strategies Used in Green Purchasing

The strategies listed below are ordered by the relative level of effort required by the buyer to implement them. The ranking of strategies and impacts is, of course, subject to debate, and there are many variations possible within each strategy.

- Product Content Requirements

Here, buyers specify that products must have desirable green attributes. This is perhaps the most common type of green purchasing and is exemplified by the many

thousands of organisations that make it a policy to purchase paper with recycled content. The cost to buyers is usually not much higher than that of 'normal' purchasing practices.

- Product Content Restrictions

In this case, buyers specify that products must not contain environmentally undesirable attributes. This is also a very common strategy. Bans on CFCs or other chemical content, on plastic foam in packaging and on solvent-based coatings are among the most common examples. Buyers may have higher costs because the elimination of product ingredients may require them to adjust their own production or product design. However, costs often are lower because the buyer avoids problems associated with using toxic chemicals or with disposing of excessive solid waste.

- Product Content Labelling or Disclosure

In this strategy, buyers require disclosure of the environmental or safety attributes of product contents. In the USA this is in fact common in the provision of material safety data sheets (MSDSs) with commercial products. However, MSDSs address only safety, not environmental effects. Other kinds of labels in use include environmental 'seals of approval', such as Green Seal, and indicators of relative environmental impact, such as scientific certification systems, offered by various commercial organisations.

The cost to buyers of requiring this information is very low because the buyer does not commit to actually buying a different kind of product and thus may not have to make any production or design adjustments as a consequence.

Some studies support the observation that technical product standards are much more common than any other strategy. A survey of UK companies by *Supply Management* magazine showed that less than half used environmental performance to assess suppliers, but a far greater proportion claimed to use various sources to assess the environmental credentials of the raw materials themselves (Tyler 1997).

How Green is today's Youth

Green Marketing is a holistic marketing concept wherein the production, marketing consumption and disposal of products and services happen in a manner that is less detrimental to the environment with growing awareness about the implications of global warming, non-biodegradable solid waste, harmful impact of pollutants etc. The rules are changing – and shopping lists along with them. An overwhelming majority (84%) of shoppers are now buying some green products from time to time, fuelling mass markets for clothing made from organically grown fibres; organically produced foods; cold-water and ultra-concentrated detergents; natural cleaning, personal-care, and pet-care products; air- and water filtration devices; low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paints; portable bottled water containers; and biological pesticides and fertilizers..

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