

# Green Marketing: An Overview of Marketers' Perspective towards Green Products

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## Key Words:

1. Green marketing
2. Green Product
3. Eco- friendly
4. Purchasing Behavior
5. Marketing Strategy

## Abstract

Green marketing is a current phenomenon which has developed a great importance in the modern business environment. A green business implements practices that are common to all business, reducing, reusing and recycling. Additionally, the evolution of green marketing has opened the door of opportunity to exploit and provide a competitive advantage over firms. This paper analyzed the different issues of green marketing. The research aims to provide theoretical contribution in understanding the consumer willingness and intention to purchase of green products. The research also examines the need of green marketing and explores the challenges and strategies of businesses have with green marketing. The study revealed that consumers are becoming more ecologically conscious and desirous of purchasing environment friendly products i.e. green products to play their role towards a greener world. Many researches also suggested that consumers are increasingly choosing or avoiding products based on their environmental impact. But they were not aware as to what constitutes environmentally friendly products. Hence, marketers need to consider efforts that are required to convert the environment concern into environmental consumer behavior as green marketing is something that will continuously grow in both practice and demand. Marketers by satisfying this urge and desire of consumer towards environment through effective promotional strategies to educate them about green products, their usage and resultant impact on the environment protection will in long run help enhance their goodwill and building strong brand image in the eyes of consumers.

## INTRODUCTION

With a tidal wave of interest focusing on ways to reduce energy consumption and at the same time to be ecologically and environmentally, Green marketing has fast emerged as a worldwide phenomenon which interests both the marketing practitioners as well as the consumers. The greediness of a human being for desire to get maximum with minimum resulted into a ruining the essential supporting systems of life i.e. land, water and air (Smith, 2009). The World Health Organisation (WHO) Reported air pollution in India causes 5, 27,700 deaths every year, 21 percent of communicable diseases in India are related to polluted water (Mannarswamy, 2011). Moreover, National Geographic (May, 2008) ranked Indians at the bottom of the list of 14 nationalities in environmental awareness. A new sense of urgency about Indian environmental degradation has compelled a number of ordinary individuals to make eco-conscious life style changes (Jain & Kaur, 2004). The green marketing has become a

mainstream issue and consequentially consumers are becoming more concerned about their habits and the effect that these have on the environment (Krause, 1993). According to American Marketing Association "Green marketing is the marketing of product that are presumed to be environmentally safe. Polonsky (1994) defines green marketing as "green marketing" means all the activities intended to generate as well as facilitate any exchange in order to satisfy human needs with minimal impact on the environment. It also includes development and marketing of such product and services that satisfy the customer requirement for quality, reliable price and easy availability of the product without having a harmful impact on the environment (Rakshita, 2011). This green marketing approach is largely used as a tool by the gigantic corporate houses in order to make a difference in the consumer's point of view when it comes to making market decisions. Owing to the globalization, most enterprises standardized the marketing strategies around the world. Hence, these enterprises were greatly influenced by green marketing. For those enterprises that could not catch up the green marketing strategy, they would gradually be excluded or eliminated.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The first signs of interest in green marketing could be seen in the 1970s but it was not until late 1980s and the 1990s

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that green marketing gained attention from a broader audience (Hess and Timen, 2008). Researchers argued for a rapid growth in the use of ecological products which represented a shift in consumption behavior (Prothero, 1997; Gurau and Ranchhod, 2005) and the findings have shown an increased demand for green products and consumers were ready to pay additional cost (Mintel, 1991). Furthermore the view of green management as a profitable strategy arose, since green corporations ideally use fewer raw materials, waste less and produce less pollution (Wasik, 1996). Companies claimed to have changed to a more environmental friendly approach (Crane, 2000).

However as research progressed, findings emerged showing that the positive attitudes toward environmental friendliness did not result in increased sales of green products. The actual growth of green consumerism was found to be very little and a difference between concern and actual purchase was identified by the mid 1990s. Although the market share of green products continued to slowly increase, the earlier boom or the remarkable growth of environmental products were no longer a reality (Peattie, 1999; Crane, 2000; Peattie and Crane, 2005).

A dominating approach to green marketing that evolved during this period was the Holistic view which meant that marketers and corporations adopting an environmental friendly strategy must, due to the nature of environmental issues, consider the entire chain of events the company enrolls in. It includes steps such as planning, production, product features, logistics, packaging as well as promotion and advertisement as a part of the marketing process (Wasik, 1996; Ottman, 1993). This marketing has taken place in three phases (Peattie, 2001). The first phase was known as "Ecological marketing" in which all marketing activities were carried out in order to assist the ever increasing environmental problems and offered solutions for these problems. The second phase was called "Environmental phase" as after the environmental problems, the entire focus was shifted on the implementation of cleaner technologies and invention of products that would better the environment or at least not increase the already existing problems. The last phase termed as "Sustainable phase" came into existence by the late nineties and early millennium where it became essential for manufacturing companies to produce eco-friendly products as the customers were demanding environmentally friendly products and technologies.

#### Power of Green Lies in Marketers' Hands

It was not engineers, lawyers or legislators that had the most power to clean up the environment. Instead, Jacquelyn A. Ottman (2008) wrote in *Marketing Daily* that

"the power of green lies in marketers' hand". The creative folks who have the power to design and promote cleaner products and technologies and help consumers evolve to more sustainable lifestyles. Over 75 percent of the environmental impact that a product throws off during its lifetime is determined at the design stage, when, for instance, the materials are chosen, the recyclability of a product is determined, and when the amount of toxic chemicals it embodies is decided. And it does not stop at the design stage. Marketers often determine the concept, too. That's where the real leverage for our innovative skills comes in.

#### Consumer Willingness and Purchase Intention towards Green Products

Due to increasing media attention, increased awareness of environmental issues, rising pressure from environmental groups, stringent legislation and major industrial disasters (Luck and Giyanti, 2009; McIntosh, 1990; Butler, 1990; Tapon and Leighton, 1991; Charter, 1992; Wagner, 1997) the environment has become a mainstream issue and consequentially consumers are getting concerned about their habits and the effect that these have on the environment (Krause, 1993). There are many researches to suggest that consumers are increasingly choosing or avoiding products based on their environmental impact (Coddington, 1993; Davis, 1993; McDougall, 1993; Ottman, 1992; The Roper Organization, 1990; Grove et al, 1996). According to Green Portfolio (2006) 50 percent of marketing and PR management believed that green credentials were important to customers; and 84 percent predicted this importance was likely to grow further. Consumers are not too much concerned about the environment but as they have become more sophisticated, they require clear information about how choosing one product over another will benefit the environment. But, many consumers remain confused about which products are better for society and the environment.

Patra and Joshi (2009) believed that majority of respondents considered individuals to be responsible must take appropriate initiatives to protect the environment. Research has shown that consumers do not always understand environmentally friendly labels attached to products (Kangun and Polonsky 1995). Eco-labels such as 'Biodegradable', 'Sustainable', 'Environmental friendly', and 'Recyclable' are usually unfamiliar or unknown to consumers. The study also revealed that majority of respondents are willing to pay price premium, but the level of acceptability varied considerably (Aryal, 2009). In general only top two percent will pay more than 20 percent for many green products whereas majority of shoppers are looking for parity in pricing related to more sustainable



products (Sachdev, 2011; Kumar, 2011).

Moreover, Ali et al. (2011) found that there are many customers who have positive and high intention to purchase green products but due to high prices and poorer qualities as compared to non-green products then do not buy them. Hence, Rao et al. (2011) suggests that if business offer environmental friendly products to consumers with affordable prices and high quality as compared to traditional products, along these consumers have positive intentions to purchase green products, green product purchase will be high. Many organizations have responded to these changing consumer preferences (Carson and Fyfe, 1992). A research (Athens laboratory, 2009) has reported that 92.8% of consumer has a positive attitude towards the enterprises that are focus on environmental matters & sensitive towards solution of environmental problems (Chan, 2001).

### **Need of Green Marketing**

With increasing human wants and depleting resources it became mandatory for the marketers across the globe to use the resources efficiently and effectively. The global changes in the environment were becoming critical not only for the consumers but also for the managements across the globe. The worldwide evidences indicated that people were concerned about the environment and were ready to change their life style and behavior. Because of the attention of the society, more and more firms started to accept the responsibility of being less harmful to the environment. Companies which adopted policies of environmental sustainability and developed strategies such as Green Marketing or Environmental Marketing not only reduced the environmental damage but also increased the profit for themselves (Van Dam & Apeldoorn, 1996; Fuller & Gillett, 1999; Porter & Van der Linde, 1995; Sharma, Iyer, Mehrotra, & Krishnan, 2010; Kotler and Armstrong, 2001; Berth, 2011). As a result of this, green marketing had evolved, which justified the growing market for sustainable and socially responsible product and services. In 2006, Gallop poll highlighted that 77 percent Americans were concerned about the environmental problem and felt to get involved in environmentally product and services. It was reported that in the USA "green markets" counted about \$250 billion, while 63 billion of consumer were directed towards products that were environment friendly in comparison of ordinary ones. The same consumers were also ready to spend an additional 7-20 percent in order to buy the green products (Reithman, 1992; Papadopoulos et al, 2010).

**Why Firms are Adopting Green Marketing:** - According to Miller (2008), green businesses continue to evolve, and new companies are joining the trend. Francois and Loic

(2009) added that the green economy is valued at more than \$209 billion annually and is expected to reach \$1 trillion by 2020. So, it seems interesting to focus on the reasons explaining the behavior change of those companies. Polonsky (1994) give some reasons for firms to use green marketing. Keller (1987) and Shearer (1990) noticed that organizations perceived green marketing as an opportunity that could be used to achieve its objectives (Francois and Loic, 2009). Moreover, the people, as individual and as industrialist, were more concerned about the environment and changed their behavior in consequence (Queensland Government, 2006) and many firms saw opportunities that could be exploited (Mishra and Sharma, 2010; Polonsky, 1994).

### **Social Responsibility**

Many studies based on environment had been done to determine the driver of corporate environmental response (Camino, 2007; Sharma, 1997; Bowen, 2002; Aragon-Correa, 1998). The firms were beginning to realize that they were members of the wider community and therefore must behave in an environmentally responsible fashion. The organizations believed that they have a moral obligation to be more socially responsible (Francois and Loic, 2009; Davis, 1992; Keller, 1987; Shearer, 1990, McIntosh, 1990; Freeman and Liedtka, 1991; Glorieux-Boutonnat, 2004; Polonsky, 1994). Many companies discovered the necessity to become green when they were hurt by bad performances or negative rumors (Barnet, 2007; Louppe, 2006; Bansal, 2005).

### **Government Laws and Regulation**

Some firms chose to green their systems, policies and products due to economic and non-economic pressures from their consumers, business partners, regulators, citizen groups and other stakeholders (Prakash, 2002). Governmental bodies were forcing firms to become more responsible (Francois and Loic, 2009; NAAG, 1990). The role of the government was to protect consumers and society and this protection had significantly affected green marketing implications (Francois and Loic, 2009; Mishra and Sharma, 2010; Polonsky, 1994).

### **Competition**

Competitors' environmental activities also pressed firms to change their environmental marketing activities (Francois and Loic, 2009; NAAG, 1990). Many researchers had pointed that green management could be a 'weapon', for the marketer in helping organizations to improve their competitiveness in the market. (Hart, 1995; Trung and Kumar, 2005; Ambec and Lanoie; 2008). The firms had the desire to maintain their competitive position and tended to emulate competitors promoting their environmental



behaviors (Polonsky, 1994). In some instances this competitive pressure had caused an entire industry to modify and thus reduced its detrimental environmental behavior (Singh, 2008).

### **Cost Reduction**

The other big reason pushing a company to become green was the cost associated with waste disposal or reductions in material usage forcing companies to modify their behavior (Francois and Loic, 2009; Azzone & Manzini, 1994). Therefore firms that could reduce harmful wastes might incur substantial cost savings. According to Miller (2008), the implementation of sustainable marketing practices was good for cost cutting but also for the customer relationship management and the return on investment (Francois and Loic, 2009).

### **Companies Responding to Call of Green Marketing**

Many researchers has pointed that green management could be a 'weapon', for the marketer to helping organizations to improve their competitiveness in the market. (Hart, 1995;Trung and Kumar, 2005; Ambec and Lanoie, 2008). Now, the Green marketing trend was getting popular in many different firms. Many organizations have responded to these changing consumer preferences (Carson and Fyfe, 1992). Here are the some examples of it.

McDonald's replaced its clam shell packaging with waxed paper because of increased consumer concern relating to polystyrene production and Ozone depletion (Mishra and Sharma, 2010; Singh, 2008). It had also been active in educating its customers about the company's environmental activities and positions. Brochures were made available in restaurants informing customers about ozone depletion, the rain forest, and packaging (Hart and Savobada 1995).

Since the early 1990s, Xerox's aim had been to produce waste free products to help their customers achieve their waste free office goals. In 1999, Xerox diverted 60 million pounds of parts from landfills through reuse, and 88 million pounds of parts were recycled (Xerox corp.). Xerox also introduced a "high quality" recycled photocopier paper in an attempt to satisfy the demands of firms for less environmentally harmful products (Mishra and Sharma, 2010, Xerox corporation, Singh, 2008).

In 1994 , Philips launched the "Earth Light," a super energy-efficient compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulb designed to be an environmentally preferable substitute for the traditional energy-intensive incandescent bulb and promised of more than \$20 in energy savings over the product's life span compared to incandescent bulbs. These bulbs were also certified by the Energy Star label, which

certified that products consume up to 30 percent less energy than comparable alternatives.

Dell had been one of the vendors who focus on producing green IT products. They had a strategy called "Go green with Dell" to sell these products in the market. It also came in an eco-friendly packaging with a system recycling kit bundled along. Dell, also actively pursued green innovations that was of value in 2009 from data-center efficiency to the use of eco-friendly materials for everything from chassis design to product packaging. (Welling and Chavan, 2010).

Tata motors ltd. was setting up an eco-friendly showroom using natural material for its flooring and energy efficient lights. The Tata chain, was in the process of creating eco-rooms which had energy efficient mini bars, organic bed linen and napkins made up of recycled papers. The other eco- friendly consumer product that was low cost water purifier made up of natural ingredients and indica EV, an electric car that would run on polymer lithium ion batteries (Gaba, 2011).

Epson made an environmental policy in order to harmonizing their business with the global environment (Epson 2006). The company claimed that they would follow the policies which were providing earth-friendly products, recycling used products and changing the processes to reduce the burden of the environment. Actually, the group had done some environmental acts such as collected and recycled the ink in nine countries and changed their packaging for the LFP (large format printer) ink cartridge form normal cardboard to recycled cardboard. In addition of those acts, Epson broadened their environmental concern from the products to transportation and packing methods (WedWire 2006).

### **Major Challenges of Green Marketing**

1. According to Pirakateeswari (2010), now days, many organizations want to turn green due to increasing environmental pressure. But still there are facing many challenges in green business like:-
2. Green products require renewable and recyclable material, which is costly.
3. Majority of the people are not aware of green product and their uses.
4. Majority of Consumer have distrust regarding the credibility of green products.
5. Majority of consumer are not willing to pay a premium for green products.
6. The environmentally responsible action of today might be harmful in the future



### Strengthening Ways to Implementing Green Marketing Strategies and Tactics

Chase and Smith(1992) found that 70% of the consumer purchase decision were influenced by environmental protection message present in advertising and product labeling, but consumers also express a great degree of confusion about the green terminology used by marketers to convey a "green message" (Caswell and Mojdzuska, 1996). In some cases, consumers are also unaware of regulations on environmental safety or the implications that permit businesses to place such labels on their products (Iyer, 1999). Laroche et al (2001) suggest that the education of the consumer is one of an appropriate method for increasing perceived convenience and establishing credibility for environmental friendly Products.

Cheah and Phau (2005) claimed that eco literacy, interpersonal influence and value orientation are proposed to have strong correlations with the attitudes towards environmentally friendly products. Hence, sales promotion and product packaging are more likely strategy to result in better marketing of green products. Although, many strategy have been developed about the green marketing. But it is still confusing that how to go green. According to Ottman (1997), the currency of green business world is innovation, flexibility, change and heart. By using these strategies, eco -entrepreneurs can set a greener pace for their business (Hart, 2005; Ottman, 2006; Mishra, 2007; Miller, 2008; Ottman 2008; Francois and Loic, 2009; Mishra and Sharma, 2010).

- 1.Do your homework. Understand the full range of environmental, economic, political and social issue that affect your consumer and your product & service now and over the long term.
- 2.Create new product and service that balance consumer's desires for high quality, convenience and affordable pricing with minimal environmental impact over the entire life of your product.
- 3.Educate the people about green products benefits. Help them understand the issues that affect your business as well as the benefit of your environmentally preferable technology, materials and designs.
- 4.Establish credibility for your marketing efforts.
- 5.Avoid misleading activities and be transparent.
- 6.Build coalitions with corporate environmental stakeholders.
- 7.Communicate your corporate commitment and project your values.
- 8.Don't quit. Continuously strive for "Zero" environmental

impact of your product and process; learn from your mistakes.

Hartman et al (2006) revealed that a well-implemented green positioning strategy can lead on the whole to a more favorable perception of the brand, thus giving support to the green marketing approach in general. Because

"Progress is possible, No the single can stop it, though barrier is there, we have to face it."

-Amartya Sen

### CONCLUSION

Above discussion clearly indicate about the increased consumer awareness and willingness to play their role towards a greener world. Similarly, the marketer are responding and also being proactive in discharging their social responsibility and moral duty of being green. The review beings forth the point that marketing of green products and services is the need of the hour. With advancement of communication technology, environment has become a mainstream issue and consequentially consumers are getting concerned about their habits and the effect that these have on the environment. Many researches also suggested that consumers are increasingly choosing or avoiding products based on their environmental impact. On the other side, this green marketing approach is largely used as a tool by the gigantic corporate houses in order to make a difference in the consumer's point of view towards green products. Hence, it can be suggested that provided marketers step out being innovative informing consumer and responding their willingness to discharge their more duty of being environment friendly by designing environmentally products and process as marketers is the only person who have the power to design and promote cleaner products and technologies and help consumers evolve to more sustainable lifestyles. But, the ultimate responsibility falls not only to marketers and but also of stakeholders i.e. Government, Environmental protection agencies, Media, to create awareness about green products as a mean to save the environment. The stakeholders should take initiative keeping in the mind that consumer are concerned and willing to do their bit towards environment protection. Marketers by satisfying this urge and desire of consumer towards environment through effective promotional strategies to educate them about green products, their usage and resultant impact on the environment protection will in long run help enhance their goodwill and building strong brand image in the eyes of consumers.



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