

GREEN CONSUMERISM: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION & ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY; AN IMPACT STUDY

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Abstract - "Do or Die Situation", spoken very frequently with a great ease but could only be described by a soldier who is actually fighting a battle. And we might prove to be a coward if we run away from the war front of environmental change. Every small effort counts. 'Sustainability' becomes the key here. Most of the companies today are now using Sustainability & Green Marketing practices as their CSR for the survival of humanity on the planet Earth. Whatever wrong we have done with the environment, we have to correct it ourselves. A lot of literature on green marketing practices has been written and reviewed over the years, this paper tries to analyze the impact of green marketing strategies used by the companies on the customer satisfaction and environmental safety using comprehensive literature review. So this paper holds importance for other researchers for knowledge base.

Keywords - Green Marketing, Customer Satisfaction, Environmental Safety.

INTRODUCTION

With the alarms of Typhoons, temperature rise, change in harvest time, unnatural rainfalls, rise in sea levels, melting of ice caps, increased green house gas emissions; consumers are now become more aware and vigilant about the prevailing situations. This has led to the growing green marketing practices and customers also are accepting green products easily now. So far very less analysis has been done on the green revolution in marketing. Today green marketing has been seen as an opportunity to develop new products and expand the boundaries of market. In fact it is slowly becoming a tool for the industries gain more and more customer loyalty.

WHAT IS "GOING GREEN"?

Green marketing in literal terms is the marketing of environmentally safe products and this concept entered the marketing word in late 1970s. The

American Marketing Association AMA, held the first workshop on ecological marketing in 1975 which became the foundation stone of green marketing concept. Recycling your e-waste, becoming a paperless organization, acquiring eco-friendly means of advertising, developing efficient and environmental friendly production processes and packaging styles and sometimes modifying the product itself for green practices are some of the green strategies that the firms have acquired. Green marketing has not been giving the desired results to the managers and social activists because even if one tries to modify the product in the green way, not necessary that the customer would be keen about it because mostly customers purchase the eco-friendly products only if all their features are same as the other products which means that when the consumers are asked to make a choice between the product features and the environment you can be always sure that environment won't win. Consumers would never buy a product against their needs or desires

even if it is at the cost of environment. This is exactly what happened with Ford Motor Co. when it launched a two-seater electric car which was scrapped out in late 2002 because it needed to be recharged after every 50 miles drive for at least six hours. So, be it an environmental hazard, consumer will buy the product which makes him satisfied. [1]

SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH GREEN PRACTICES

Sustainability Marketing Myopia: Sustainability marketing myopia is a term used in sustainability marketing referring to a distortion stemming from the overlooking of socio-environmental attributes of a sustainable product or service at the expenses of customer benefits and values. It basically is aimed at marketing the products and services which satisfy the consumer's needs and simultaneously is non-hazardous to the environment. Sustainability marketing myopia is avoidable by identifying and stressing upon cost efficiency, health and safety of the customer along with convenience. Alignment of socio-ecological attributes with core benefits might also help in this case. Any kind of sustainable practice can be introduced by integrating economic and ecological considerations in the decision making policies of the company.

THE FOUR PS GREEN MARKETING

Green Product : Like any other marketing practice Green Marketing also starts with the designing of the product called as 'Green Design'. In this case the product should be so well designed that it satisfies consumer needs and manufacturer's profit targets. Recycline's Preserve brand- recycled plastic toothbrushes, razors, disposable plates, forks, knives, spoons, cups and tongue cleaners are an example of such sustainable green products. For any type

of green product to be successful in capturing market the green branding attributes have to be successfully communicated. [4] Here, the labeling of the product which states everything that makes a product compatible with the environment is very important because it straight away influences the buying decision of the consumer. This kind of labeling can be termed as 'Green - Labeling'.

Green Price: Purchase is always influenced and as a whole encouraged by the affordability of the product exceptions may be over ruled. What remains the question here is whether it finally pays to go green. Any type of instability in the prices will make the buyer more open for any other product and overlook the green one. Environmentally friendly products have very less fossil-fuel content as compared to other non-green brands. Manufacturing them consumes very less oil as it favors renewable-energy and energy-saving practices that is what makes them a consumer and manufacturers choice. Though they aren't totally spared by the fuel price hikes which in-turn increases their transportation costs. But with the shoot up in energy prices pursuing up the prices of the mainstream products, green products are becoming a shopper's preference these days.

Green Promotion: There are two attributes in green promotion one is promoting a green product and other one is promoting your product green or mainstream in the green way. Most of the buyers find those advertisements more impactful which portray an environment friendly picture and in turn develop a brand equity and loyalty as well. Consumers love to associate themselves with the companies which are environmental heroes [11]. Any idea would work when it is well communicated. Social networking websites are the ones which best work in this case. Many companies

have been successful in creating strong brand loyalty through.

Here, you can quote a very interesting term 'Extreme Green' [12]. The term becomes self explanatory, as it signifies the companies which have fully integrated Environmental issues in their business processes. For example The Body Shop, a very well known company with social responsibility embedded in its identity and purpose right from manufacturing to marketing everything is Green in their case [13]. This image of Environment Steward makes the consumer love to associate themselves with the company's product.

Green Distribution: This is a very delicate part of all the four Green Ps wherein you need to assure the customers that their green products are totally distributed in the most green manner possible. This would influence the customers when they will find a company so committed to environment[14].

Stakeholder's Interest: Stakeholders are the ones with maximum influential position in a company and its market [15], [16], [17], [18]. Any type of green strategy whether product, packaging, nature of product, its advertising, promotion or green awareness is totally influenced by the stakeholders. Stakeholders stand at the forefront of the eco-marketing strategies.

Customer Satisfaction and green marketing: Green marketing would prove to be effective only if it turns the receiver of the information into satisfied receiver. Where, the reported experience of a customer with a firm's products, services and marketing exceeds the specified satisfaction goals of the customers. [5]

A survey reports that marketing managers have always found customer satisfaction metric the best solution for managing and monitoring their business.

With positive customer satisfaction scale a company can easily expect brand loyal customers and hence can be sure of gaining word-of-mouth publicity. [5] Thus, literature supports and reinforces the fact that customer satisfaction and loyalty have a strong relationship. The type of loyalty created by customer satisfaction has been termed as Attitudinal Loyalty. It then inclines the consumer towards the brand and converts intentions into buying decisions. Satisfaction can also be termed as the outcome of service quality or the response generated towards any experience.

Most of the Authors have strongly recommended that a high level of customer involvement with a brand can be induced with the inclusion of environmental issues owing to the growing environmental consciousness globally. [19] [20] [21] [22] Thus, any green type of green marketing initiative should always focus on the improved environmental quality and customer satisfaction. Thus environmental knowledge's significance on the consumer's environmental attitude and consciousness that he carries. Thus the companies are facing increased pressure for green product development and green marketing. Baverstam and Maria Larsson (2009), in their study have shown that companies need to well promote their green products and services and the financial benefits earned would lure a competitive advantage. [6] Hung-Ta (2009) has reinforced similar fact in his study that global rise of environmental awareness is forcing companies to adopt Environmental Administration Protection policies.[7]. Thus, it is sure that customers want to associate themselves with the eco-friendly products.

HOW GREEN-CONSCIOUS THE CONSUMERS ARE?

Consciousness about environmental safety and the use of green products can be

termed as Green consumerism which rates the consumers on the basis of their inclination towards greenness. Though it is tough to judge the characteristics of green consumers which most of the researchers have found to be very complex.^[8] For example, Beer & Benjamin (2013) in their study found out an inverse U shape of environmental consciousness with age which revealed the fact that environmental consciousness is maximum at middle age^[23]. Another, news insight reveals the fact that even though consumers are very sensitive towards ecologically friendly products and their marketing and the only thing that pulls them back from making the purchase decision is the high price of items from recycled paper to organic food.^[9] Green Consumerism is thus slowly but steadily creating its own space. The proactive gestures of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) & ISO14000 series certification have been successful in creating environmental awareness at global level consumer end.

Management of Green Marketing and other environmental safety issues is not only highly challenging job but it is also very expensive and time consuming. But yes it has brought in a lot of improvements which support a company's regulatory compliance and position as a socially responsible firm.

DISCUSSION

Business writers like Charter (1992) predicted that in future the biggest struggle that will arise is going to be environmental consciousness of consumers. Same thing was reinforced by Ottmann (1992) as the trend of future markets. And today we are seeing the predictions coming true. We are witnessing the rise of Green Consumerism. The spending patterns have shown that consumers are ready to spend more for many green products and get attracted

by the green marketing practices of the firms which are functioning on the green concept. Though in some cases the only factor which becomes a hindrance is the affordability of the green products which the most influential characteristic of Green Consumerism. The green path of marketing helps a company to stand out of the crowd and gives it an edge over competition.

CONCLUSION

Today sustainability is the only way which will make us prevent the globe for our future generations. It might sound rude but we are not doing any of this for mother earth but for ourselves and our children. This growing concern and adoption of eco-friendly ideology has led to the emergence of Green Consumerism and is thus making the marketer turn to greener means of marketing. They thus have to acquire green means in all the aspects of business. Today the consumers are ready to pay more for green products and they wish to identify themselves with eco-friendly brands.

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