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Going Green: With special reference to Green Marketing

Rajeev Kumar Ranjan

PhD Scholar

UTU-Dehradun. U.K

ABSTRACT

Increasing awareness and exposure on the various environmental problems has led to a change in the way consumers adopt and consume the products. There has been a change in consumer preferences towards environmental friendly and sustainable products. People are willingly and actively trying to lessen their usage patterns of products and their disposal on the environment. However, this is not widespread and is still evolving especially in rural parts of India. The article is primarily on the green marketing strategies and their impact on the business performance. The impact finding is in the marketing term which tries to find about the awareness, credibility, satisfaction and repeat purchase of the Green products. The Green Marketing strategies used specifically for the study are Eco-Labeling, Supply chain initiatives, Product modification for green effect and customer adoption of Green Product.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Strategies, Green Consumers.

Introduction:

The protection and development of environmental resources and social responsibility is an area of growing importance for consumers, businesses, governments, and the society at large (Banerjee, Iyer, and Kashyap 2003; Grinstein and Nisan 2009; Peattie and Peattie 2009). Green marketing has become known worldwide as environmental issues are being globally noticed. Both consumers and companies have started to pay more attention in thinking about the consequences their actions or activities have on the environment, (Polonsky, 1994). Green marketing is the way forward in which firms can advertise and market their products and at the same time educate the consumers that they are working in an environmental friendly way, (Chen & Chang, 2012, 489). Many companies have taken it as a part of their business strategy. Can green marketing bring added value to the company

and be profitable activity? The question about the competitive consequences of green marketing still remains largely unclear and needs to be deliberated upon further (Fraj, Martinez, Matute, 2013) .By determining green marketing’s strategic role; it is easier to understand its implications to the company. Green marketing the term and the concept in recent times has been widely used in the marketing discipline to describe the promotion of green activities in companies. Green marketing is: “the holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the needs of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way” (Peattie & Charter, 2003, p.727). Green marketing is strongly linked to sustainability as it helps to achieve sustainability through generating and delivering sustainable solutions with continuously satisfying customer’s changing needs. The examination of the green customer or adoption of a Green product has been a challenge for marketing academics and practitioners and the corporate world ever since. It is still not clear what features would customer like to have in a Green Product. As the consumer and society becomes more and more concerned with the natural environment, the businesses have begun to modify their behavior in an attempt to address consumers "new" concerns regarding greenness. Some businesses have been quick to accept concepts like environmental management systems and waste minimization, and have integrated greenness issues into all organizational activities to affect consumer buying patterns and in turn impacting the business performance. Some evidence of this is the development of journals such as "Business Strategy and the Environment" and "Nature," which are specifically designed to disseminate research relating to business' environmental behavior and sustainability.

Defining Green Marketing:

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 (Polonsky 1994).

Some of the definitions given by renowned researchers are as follows:

The first definition of Green Marketing was given by Henion and Kinnear (1976). It defines green marketing as, “the implementation of marketing programs directed at the environmentally conscious market segment.”

The American Marketing Association workshop on ecological marketing held in 1976, defined Green 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).

Thus, the above initial definitions characterized green marketing as a field of study which is concerned only with fact finding related to the ill effects (such as pollution, depletion of resources due to overuse) of marketing activities *i.e.* production and consumption.

Polonsky (1994) has defined Green Marketing as, “Green or Environmental Marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment.”

Another definition given by Fuller’s (1999) defines green marketing as, “the process of planning, implementing, and controlling the development, pricing, promotion and distribution of products in a manner that satisfies the following criteria:

1. Customer needs are met,
2. Organizational goals are attained and
3. The process is compatible with ecosystems”.

According to Ottman (2006) Green Marketing satisfies two objectives:

1. Improved environmental quality and
2. Customer satisfaction.

Thus, we can observe that above definition highlights the fact that green marketing also performs the function of traditional marketing such as satisfying human wants through exchanges, but it also makes it clear that such exchanges and the resulting satisfaction obtained should not severely affect the natural environment. The above definitions also highlights the specific activities and objectives of green marketing such as product design keeping in mind environmental considerations, promotions of product offerings, satisfaction of human wants and fulfillment of organization objectives all in tune with reducing environmental impact.

Thus, from the above definitions we can conclude that Green Marketing is defined as “the holistic management process for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the requirements of

customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way”. Therefore, we can conclude that Green Marketing is satisfying the needs of the customers profitably by having the least impact on the environment.

The marketers needs to look at concept of green marketing in broader perspective and needs to incorporate the following points in their strategies to improve their business/marketing performance of the companies:

1. Marketers need to look for new ways of calculating and communicating value that integrates environmental value, thereby moving away from financial measures which have no real environmental meaning.
2. Change the discourse regarding the environment, highlighting the importance of action and inaction, which needs to be based on increased education about the human–environment interface.
3. Marketing needs to refocus its emphasis on want satisfaction, shifting away from the acquisition of goods, thereby enhancing how marketers create value. Making these changes will allow marketers to operationalize transformative green marketing so the human condition and the natural system that humans operate within are both improved and bring about transformative green marketing.

Thus green marketing should look at minimizing environmental damages, rather than necessarily completely eliminating it.

Review of Literature:

The study by Ann Kronrod et al (2012) highlighted and explained the surprising prevalence of assertive environmental messages in the media. Environmental agencies, which are populated with people who perceive protecting the environment as a highly important issue, should understand that not all consumers are as informed and concerned about the environment. The study by Murugesan (2008) underlined that firms may use green marketing as an attempt to address cost or profit related issues. Disposing of environmentally harmful byproducts, such as polychlorinated biphenyl contaminated oil are becoming increasingly costly and the firms that can reduce harmful wastes may incur substantial cost savings.

Consumers have to play an important role if companies have to be made responsible for preservation of the environment. They should stop buying products of companies which are

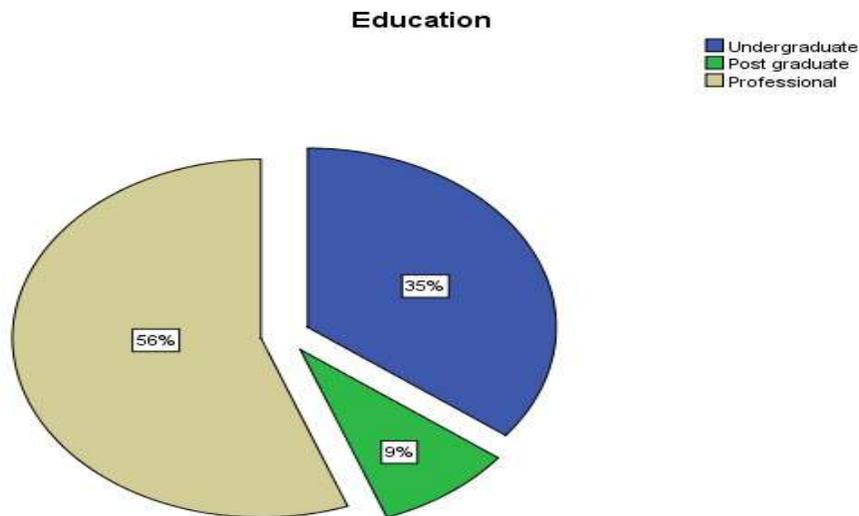
polluting the environment. Apart from companies, NGOs also have very important roles to play. NGOs should carry out research and tell the companies how they can make their process environmental friendly. Rajan Saxena (2010) maintained that Green products and services are today increasingly being accepted by both the companies and customers. Following are some of the arguments in favour of green marketing which makes it profitable for the firm/organization. An aware customer now insists on a green 'product and packaging material. Aware customers are joining together to form interest groups which lobby for eco-friendly products and legislation to protect their environment. Given the choice, customers tend to buy eco-friendly products. The study by Jacquelyn A.Ottoman (2006) explained that Green Marketing must satisfy two objectives: Improved Environmental Quality and Customer Satisfaction. Research indicates that many green products have failed because of green marketing myopia. Marketers myopic focus on their products greenness over the broader expectations of consumers or other market players such as regulators or activists. David L. Loudon & Albert J. Della Bitta (2010) signified that the green movement is growing extensively and marketers are seeking to cash in on an environmental awakening. Green may be to the 90s what —light was to the 80s, with products clamoring to show how they are environmentally sensitive. Michael R. Solomon (2009) identified that firms that adopt the philosophy to protect or enhance the natural environment as they go about their business activities is an instance of green marketing. Marketers point to a segment of consumers who practice LOHAS an acronym for Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability. The study by Henry Assael (2006) observed that In U.S., Companies have taken actions to promote environmental controls towards green marketing; For example: Reynolds Wrap promotes recycling , while Crane Papers advertises the natural content of its products, McDonald's switched from plastic to paper wrapping and uses recyclable products to build its restaurants. Douglas J. Darymple & Leonard J. Parsons (2002) believe that the —green movement is an answer for business to produce more environmentally safe products. This approach is known as green marketing. Environmentalism is only one aspect of responsible conduct. The products should be designed for recyclability where possible. Green marketing is a subject that has been researched for the last decades. One of the first books published was "Ecological Marketing" by Henion and Kinnear in 1976 (Polonsky, 1994, 2).

Research Design:

As a consequence of the preceding demonstration of Research approach and Methodology the exploratory and descriptive research designs emerged as sequential options, wherein the crystallizations of issues and the identification of the problem had to be supported by exploratory research design and once the problems and issues were identified and hypothesis have to be tested the descriptive research design was methodically utilized.

Demographic Profile of respondents:

		Age group	Education	Occupation
N	Valid	300	300	300
	Missing	0	0	0

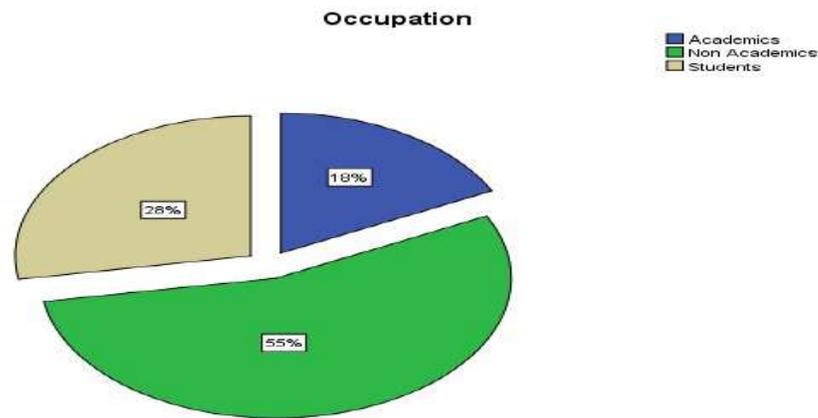


(Figure 1)

Interpretation:

From the figure above out of the total 300 respondents i.e. 100 % :: 56% of the respondents are professionals having/pursuing MBA degrees. 35% respondents are undergraduates with

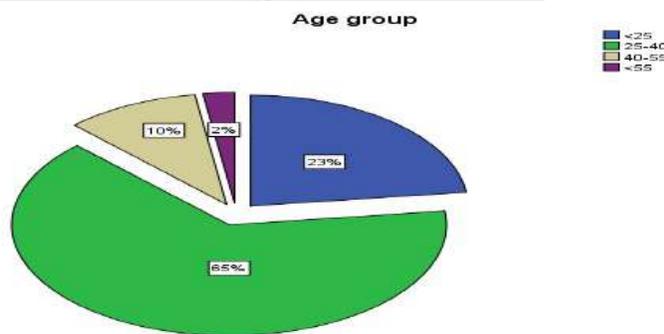
B.sc, B.Com and BBA degrees and the remaining 9% are postgraduates with science and Humanities degrees like M.sc or MA.



(Figure 2)

Interpretation:

Of the 300 respondents 55% of the respondents are professionals working with the corporate sector or multinational companies 18% respondents are in to the profession of Academics/Teaching/Research and the remaining 28% are Students.



(Figure 3)

Interpretation:

Of the 300 respondents 65% of the respondents are in the age group of 25-40. This age group comprises the maximum number of respondents because this age group is more

exposed to the outside world via internet and other technological means. 23% respondents are less than 25 years of age 10% of the respondents are in the age group of 40-55 and the remaining 2% consisted of respondents above the age of 55 years.

Discussion:

Green marketing is largely yet to be understood by the stakeholders of a marketing process in similar terms. It implies that the marketer on the one side has the perspective of environmental sustainability while he refers to green marketing but on the other side consumer does not hold a view of Green marketing with adaptive persuasion. As environment conditions changed has forced the company to adopt some green practices into their business and many companies have become prosper and gained competitive advantage by adopting a number of publically accepted business practices. The companies present different strategies, which companies adopt while entering in an existing or in new market. If the company is not actually green, they can see what different strategies are available for them when they want to enter into a new or existing market. The analysis shows that companies can use Ecolabelling of their product in communication. This will build trust that the product is greener and company could differentiate themselves from other companies in the market. These types of companies can build knowledge in the consumer about the environmental effects. On the basis of survey conducted the trend shows that the companies should put more focus in the development of their marketing mix when companies enter into new or existing market. The price factor is most important in marketing mix however this factor could be changed if companies involves in the Social responsibility.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The conclusions which emerged in due course of time evolved through the data analysis as well as the reflexive understanding of the researcher are as follows:

1. Green Marketing in itself is a terminology yet to reach towards a universally understood and interpreted concept.
- To deliberate upon the above conclusion the research found that though the meaning of Green marketing is specific in Academics terms but for marketers and consumers 'Marketing' gets shadowed by 'Green' which has imaginative interpretation largely concentric to ecological and environmental conservation but

paradoxically not having any practical relationship with such prospective conservationist thought.

- Marketers have not developed systematic plans of projecting Green marketing as a mode and Methodology and are averse of acknowledging the fact that they themselves are perplexed with this thought.
2. Marketing Process has been generic, matured and well understood. The thought and sequence of this process is associated with creating, communicating, delivery offerings which have value. But now the question arises where to put Green in the sequence.
 - Should the marketer include Green while communicating about the offerings?
 - Should it be done while creating the offerings?
 - If the answer to both of the above questions is yes then the sequential question is how? Because if 'Green' has to be inducted at the stage of creating value then the initial part of the complete value chain has to be changed.
 3. The research witness an important conclusion which is oriented with the reflexive understanding of the researcher rather than any substantial research outcome and that is the marketers in past few decades have been strongly focusing upon their functions which has taken them away from the required intimacy with other functions in the value chain. Meaning thereby:
 - Bottles water marketers are happy about the sales of their product despite their non degradable packaging without conceiving at the earlier stage that what does it imply at the end of the day.
 - When marketers are consulted by other functional managers about their initiative or compulsion of changing the process towards green, Marketers generally have one answer, "it should not affect my market share"
 4. Intra industry communications also is highly accommodative of sales based marketing efforts rather than going for a prospective integrative plan for futuristic green marketing.
 5. Interviews with the marketer and the understanding of the researcher as a field worker and as an academician are suggestive of the fact that the financial ratios and

sales potential at the end of the day supersedes the aspect of ‘serving the society at large’.

6. Awareness of the consumers on the other side is also superseded by two important barriers:

- Easy Accessibility
- A thought in consumers mind that my minimal contribution towards Green marketing may not create large difference.

7. Business performance measurement practices of the organization in relation to general marketing processes and strategies are largely associated with either the industry benchmarks of visionary industry leadership or technologically imposed practices or are based on subjective criteria of marketers understanding.

8. An intermediary conclusion with reference to Green marketing practices and strategic orientation is that though it makes a business sense that adoption of green contextually in whole of the marketing process should be done in translational phases but larger industry analysis which was beyond the scope of this research would suggest that initiating Green Marketing Processes with an orientation of complete value chain orientation would be mere beneficial for the longer term. Therefore few subsidiary conclusions are as follows:

- Marketers should develop the highest possible benchmarks according to the available knowledge in terms of Green Marketing.
- Subsequently Marketers should try to foresee that how current practices and strategies can be included or incorporated in terms of benchmarks.
- Next step should be to analyze about how the up gradation of contemporary marketing o the levels of said benchmarks can prove to be a strategic advantage.
- Then this strategic advantage must be converted into a potential market share analysis, which may subsequently to convert in to a tangible revenue perspective or any other potential desired outcome.

Recommendations:

Analysis done and the conclusions drawn, as suggested in the preceding chapters three major recommendations are proposed through this research work:

- Generation and standardization of the benchmarks in relation to Green Marketing and Green Marketing Strategies along with a process of associated evolution of the same.
- Augmentation of the current practices and processes.
- Redefining marketing in terms of Green.

Process of achievement of the above said recommendations:

Generation and standardization of the benchmarks in relation to Green Marketing and Green Marketing Strategies along with a process of associated evolution of the same:

1. Generation of Green Marketing benchmarks must be associated with complete value chain of any business.
2. Analysis of business procedures and marketing resultants should be done with the perspective of Green i.e. Even the Accounting procedures must incorporate elements of green processes.
3. Hence new generations of accountants for analyzing business and profits with respect to Green must be developed at a universal level.
4. Business Administration and Business management curriculum must be revamped through green perspective and definitional perspective of efficiency and effectiveness should include 'Green' as an element.
5. Academic Conferences and deliberations along with the researchers are in Silos, it is highly recommended that interdisciplinary conferences should be organized factoring a Green Marketing perspective on the one hand and on the other hand all the conferences in terms of business and management organized by academic forums and corporate should have a concentricity of green.
6. It's recommended that the value chains of different industries must be reevaluated with the perspective of inception of green in the processes, and (Though it seems hypothetical at this stage) and steps where green has to be incorporated not as a concept but as action should be enumerated.
7. The preceding recommendations proposes for a whole lot of generation for finding alternative processes/Product, Alternative practices for supplementing whatever out

of there is not green. For example: COLTAN must be replaced or the processes of the mining of COLTAN should intermediary be augmented before the complete replacement of COLTAN.

8. The context of above recommendations is that the earth should be foreseen as it was a hundred years ago and that can be an important benchmark.

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