

A STUDY ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS TOWARDS GREEN PRODUCTS AND GREEN MARKETING

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Abstract

Green marketing is now no more an emerging trend and neither it is a new concept, the consumers are now becoming more and more aware about their responsibility towards the society. The current research is an effort to recognize the level of awareness consumers have in the tricity i.e. Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali through a questionnaire and an interview cum discussion method. The paper was framed after having a review of the literature of the previous research done in this context earlier and it was concluded that the level of awareness amongst the people in the tricity is very less and that there is a need to make more efforts by the government and the concerned authorities to make people aware and make them feel their responsibility towards the environment.

Keywords: *Green marketing, green products, eco friendly, perception, responsibility and awareness*

Introduction:-With the emergence of consumer awareness towards the unprecedented impacts on the natural environment, the consumers are found to have become more aware about the negative influence of the usage of these products on the health of the consumers and the environment as a whole. Marketers have also started emphasizing on the benefits of using these Eco friendly products. This changing trend of consumer mindset has been due to the result of the consumption pattern and leading to environmental degradation, pollution and climate change leading to the growing need for renewable source of energy and altogether a new innovative way of doing business (Menon and Menon, 1997). Many companies have already started recognizing the need for a sustainable way of doing business whereas some companies are still on the verge towards changing their style of production, manufacturing or marketing of products to match the need and requirement of the environment. There is a cut throat competition in the market these days and the businesses are trying to make their survival possible by adopting various means and showing their socially responsible behavior is one of them. They need to understand the present as well as the upcoming trends as per the customers they serve (Rust, R. T., Lemon, K. N., and Zeithaml, V. A. 2004). The consumers have been showing a keen interest towards such products which make them feel more inclined and generate a socially responsible behavior. Green marketing or green products are not only giving advantage over the environment safety but it also helps in the development of consumer base for business growth and success (Peattie, K. 2001). The term, "Green Marketing" lays emphasis on the environmental safety which is dated back to 1980s extending to the 90s era. It includes modifications in the design of the products, advertising the products in a new manner and all other related task

to ensure the environmental safety and sustainable development.

WHAT IS GREEN MARKETING :- Majority of people are completely unaware about the concept of green products or green marketing, usually they perceive green marketing is relating to terms like Phosphate Free, Recyclable, Refillable and Ozone Friendly. But broadly speaking green marketing is a broad concept, which includes product modifications or alterations in the production process or packaging or even making some changes in the advertisement. The concept of green marketing came into existence in 1980s and early 1990s. Green marketing includes all the activities which are designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs and wants such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment. According to (Robins 2006), green marketing proposes the Green marketing propose the development of the multi-dimensional measures of value, such as the triple bottom line (TBL) that includes social and environmental value in addition to financial value. Firms are considered successful when they are able to use their marketing competence to produce valuable offerings for several market segments (Arnett and Wittmann, 2014). Furthermore, they proposed that the firm which are able to develop a marketing competence are more successfully able to develop a marketing competence and able to sustain the coordinated deployment of the assets in order to achieve their goals. Green marketing describes the efforts of a firm at designing, promoting, pricing and distribution of the products that will not cause any harm to the environment. It is a management process responsible for the identification, anticipation and satisfaction of the requirements of customers and the society in a more profitable and sustainable way (Chan, 2014).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:- Many studies and research has been conducted to study the involvement of companies and individuals towards the protection of environment. The term “Green Marketing has become more generic term for environmental, ecological or sustainable marketing. The core objective of Green marketing includes satisfaction of needs of the customers in a manner in which the manufactured products focus upon reduction of negative impact on environment (Woolvertn, A. and Dimitri, C., 2010). Henion and Kinnear 1976, studied the positive and negative impacts of marketing on energy depletion and non energy resource depletion. (Robins, 2006) studied the impact of Green marketing strategy practices on the performance of the firm and the qualities of the products so supplied. The minimum requirement for marketers is dependent upon their capacity of the firm in integration of environmental issues into marketing strategy (ies) and thus expanding the arena of thinking about the marketers, this was studied by Kotler and Levy, 1969. The stages of green marketing were studied during which the implementation of highly advanced technologies, imposition of stricter government rules and regulations and the promotion of awareness of consumers towards environmental issues has been reviving the interest of scholars and practitioners (Punitha and Rasdi, 2013). Consumers are highly concerned about the impact of his purchases upon the environment and has started showing keen interest in the green products. Protection of green environment concern and “Green Consumerism” has taken a new role in the protection of environment (Prothero, A. 1990; Strong, C. 1996). Traditional marketing has always encouraged the satisfaction for needs, wants as it has always considered that the resources are available in abundance, whereas it has been suggested that sustainability can be attained by renewing of utilized resources by mimicking the circular flow of resources in nature and that the capacity of both the resources and

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY-

- (i) To identify the level of awareness and perception for green marketing and green products in the tricity.
- (ii) To measure the impact of green marketing and green products on the consumer buying behavior.
- (iii) To make the consumers more aware about the environmental concerns and issues.

environment are limited (McDonough and Braungart 2002). Previous research has revealed that the firms have been underperforming as far as the green marketing practices are concerned (Sheth et al., 2011). Previous research conducted on green marketing involves the compliance of firms with the existing regulations and other practices in order to achieve long term sustainability and in order to avoid penalties. (Simula et al., 2009) suggested that the ecological responsibility arises from the social obligations and the values of the firms. Now a days, existing work is built which aptly outlines the steps which marketers need to identify, develop and evaluate in order to make use of sustainable behavior (McKenzie-Mohr 2011; Peattie and Peattie 2009). One of the most influential factors in terms of effecting change in sustainable consumer behavior are social factors (Abrahamse and Steg 2013). But certain studies suggested that there have been multiple barriers to sustainable change in behavior which further impacts the combining strategies (Osterhus 1997; Stern 2011). Further positive environmental actions can be a leading factor towards hope, which increases activism in climate and sustainable behaviours (Smith and Leiserowitz 2014).

NEED FOR THE STUDY:- With the growing interest of both the marketers and the consumers, it has become an emerging trend in marketing in order to gain competitive advantage over the rivals as even the consumers have started showing their inclination towards green marketing. In India, the research related to green marketing has been quite less and thus it does not give the marketers any motivation to invest more towards the same.

Thus, in the current paper, an effort has been made to address the above mentioned concerns by studying the consumer perceptions and preferences towards green marketing in India. The data for the current paper has been collected from Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula.

A sample size of 300 respondents was selected through random sampling across the leading retail outlets of Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali. A questionnaire was designed to gather information from various consumers and analyse the results thereof. Personal interviews and discussions were also done to get a clear view of the expectations of the consumers.

FINDINGS:- Gender: 68% female respondents had filled the questionnaire and 32% male respondents were there in total. The reason of choosing more of females while collection of data was that women are more into shopping for the house and the women are more educated these days and handling both the home front as well as their professional front simultaneously, thus they prefer keeping them updated about any new developments in the market. Males have started taking gradual but more of interest in the home chores so they stay updated.

AGE GROUP:- Efforts have been made to make sure that the data has been collected from respondents of all age groups. There were 20% respondents in the age groups of 25-35 years 25% in the age group of 35-45 years and 30% from 45-55 years age group and 25 % from 55 and above. **OCCUPATION:-** In order to make sure the variability of data, the data was collected from almost every category of consumers. The current research includes 15 % students, 25 % professionals, 22% from private jobs and 20% homemakers and 18% from business background.

QUALIFICATIONS:- While conducting research, it was found that the respondents are from various educational backgrounds. Data was collected from 30% respondents having qualification upto matric, 10% were only higher secondary whereas 30% were graduates and remaining 30% had qualification of post graduation or above.

Awareness of eco friendly products is concerned, the respondents from the age group of 25-35 and 55 years and above years were found to be most aware about the green products and the respondents having the most of the knowledge about the green initiatives taken by various companies in India and outside India. Whereas the second most aware was the age group of 35-45 years, followed by 45- 55 years and least aware group was the age group of 55 years and above. At the same time, the professionals and the students were the most aware class than any other category as far as the educational background is concerned. The respondents with matric or only higher secondary education were the least aware class. But the homemakers were found to be more aware due to the over exposure to the media or newspaper which made them more aware not only about the green products but their responsibility towards the protection of green environment, followed by the respondents from private jobs. The most aware category was again the professionals and the least were the students which made the inclusion of protection and conservation of environment.

WILLINGNESS TO PAY PREMIUM PRICE FOR THE ECO FRIENDLY PRODUCTS :- The students and the professionals were almost at an equal level as far as the extra payment or any premium price is concerned for the eco friendly products. It was found that the respondents of the age group of 50 years and

above and 35-45 years were the ones who were willing to pay extra money for the green products. Whereas the second highest category who was interested were the business class people, the professionals were the ones who did not show much of interest in such extra payment towards the same. The homemakers were the least interested in paying extra price as they claimed that they have a limited and fixed budget for the expenditure.

ECO FRIENDLY PRODUCTS ARE HELPFUL TO THE SOCIETY OR ENVIRONMENT :- All the respondents of almost every age group agreed that the eco friendly products are helpful to the society or environment, all the respondents from all the studied groups are of the same view for eco friendly products. But they all agreed only once they were made aware of the green products and protection of green environment. Due to their unawareness, they did not realize the importance and need to save or protect the environment.

AWARENESS ABOUT THE ECO FRIENDLY/ GREEN PRODUCTS :- It was found that the most of the awareness amongst the students and professionals was created through print media like newspapers, magazines and advertisement whereas the housewives and the business people were found to be made aware through both advertisement and word of mouth from friends or peer groups. The impact of the print media and advertisement was found to be the highest as compared to any other mode of awareness amongst the respondents.

USAGE OF PLASTIC BAGS :- The highest category who didn't prefer to use plastic bags was the age group of more than 50 years and housewives but ironically the main reason so found was not the protection of environment but to save their money and they preferred bringing their own hand made bags made out of cloth. The second high category which doesn't use plastic bags is the respondents from 25-35 years as this category was found to be more inclined towards the protection of the environment and save the natural resources. The professionals were also found to be reluctant in using the plastic bags and were found to be quite aware about their responsibility towards the environment. The matric pass respondents from business class were the ones who were not found to be initially not so interested in avoiding the plastic bags but agreed to avoid the usage on persuasion.

METHODS TO INCREASE THE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GREEN PRODUCTS :- The last question in the questionnaire comprised of the methods which all the respondents would suggest regarding the means to spread awareness amongst the people about the green products. A very mixed view was found, every respondent from different educational background, age and professional background had a different perspective as far as the selection of source to spread the knowledge is concerned.

THROUGH NEWSPAPERS:- Very few respondents, hardly 5% preferred that the awareness should be spread through newspapers, magazines or any other print media. The main reason behind such refusal was the low level of literacy level in our country due to which it will not serve the purpose completely and most of the people would remain unaware of the green products.

ADVERTISEMENTS:- 28% respondents suggested that the awareness should be spread through advertisement through television, radio or any other means of broadcasting. The respondents were of the view that the more of awareness can be spread through this mode as every person from every background, generation watches television, listens to the radio or comes across such broadcast messages through whats app which can lead to higher level of awareness and more of information can be spread to masses at ease.

ACADEMIC LEVEL:- 30% respondents from educated background suggested that the awareness about the green products and conservation of the environment can be best done if it is included in the syllabi of the students in schools and colleges. This can make the younger generation aware and thus they can spread the awareness amongst the peer group, their family members and other groups of the society. They were found with a belief that the awareness can be spread by properly educating the masses.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS:- 27% of the respondents were of the view that the right level of awareness can be achieved only if protection of

environment and considering the safety of the surroundings, everyone will have to stand together to attain the goal and this can be achieved only if certain rules, regulations and norms are prescribed by the government. They were of the view that the consumers will not take this matter into serious consideration unless it is made mandatory by the government. Furthermore, they suggested that the current initiatives so taken by the government were good but not fulfilling the required consideration of making people responsible for the protection and sustainability of the environment.

CONCLUSION:- The study was basically revolving around the sustainability of environment through various green product and initiatives to conserve the energy and while collecting the data the consumer behavior towards these products and the influence of responsibility to save environment was also found. The respondents were found to be either less aware or fully aware about the green products but the irony of the fact was that the incomplete information and awareness was found to be as good as not being there. The respondents who were aware also were not sure as to what they are supposed to do in order to contribute towards the conservation of environment. Lack of knowledge about the concept and not having any information regarding the steps to be taken to be of any help towards the society gave a very confusing outlook of the consumers. They wanted to buy green products and stop using plastic bags but at the same time, neither were they aware about the ingredients and benefits of these green products. They

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