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Green Marketing - New Hopes And Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Green marketing is the process of developing products and services and promoting them to satisfy the customers who prefer products of good quality, performance and convenience at affordable cost, which at the same time do not have a detrimental impact on the environment. It includes a broad range of activities like product modification, changing the production process, modified advertising, change in packaging, etc., aimed at reducing the detrimental impact of products and their consumption and disposal on the environment. Companies all over the world are striving to reduce the impact of products and services on the climate and other environmental parameters. Marketers are taking the cue and are going green. This is a descriptive paper, which provides theoretical information about meaning of green marketing, marketing mix of green marketing, why green marketing is chosen, benefits of green marketing, problems of green marketing, paths of greenness, marketing strategies and conclusion.

Keywords : Green Marketing, Marketing Mix

Introduction

According to the American Marketing Association, green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. Thus green marketing incorporates a broad range of activities, including product modification, changes to the production process, packaging changes, as well as modifying advertising. Yet defining green marketing is not a simple task where several meanings intersect and contradict each other; an example of this will be the existence of varying social, environmental and retail definitions attached to this term. Other similar terms used are Environmental Marketing and Ecological Marketing. 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. While the shift to "green" may appear to be expensive in the short term, it will definitely prove to be indispensable and advantageous, cost-wise too, in the long run.

Why Green Marketing?

It is really scary to read these pieces of information as reported in the Times recently: "Air pollution damage to people, crops and wildlife in the US totals tens of billions of dollars each year". "More than 12 other studies in the US, Brazil, Europe, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan have established links between air pollutants and low birth weight, premature birth, still birth and infant death".

As resources are limited and human wants are unlimited, it is important for the marketers to utilize the resources efficiently without waste as well as to achieve the organization's objective. So green marketing is inevitable.

There is growing interest among the consumers all over the world regarding protection of environment. Worldwide evidence indicates people are concerned about the environment and are changing their behavior. As a result of this, green marketing has emerged which speaks for growing market for sustainable and socially responsible products and services.

Thus the growing awareness among the consumers all over the world regarding protection of the environment in which they live, people do want to bequeath a clean earth to their offspring. Various studies by environmentalists indicate that people are concerned about the environment and are changing their behavior pattern so as to be less hostile towards it. Now we see that most of the consumers, both individual and industrial, are becoming more concerned about environment-friendly products. Most of them feel that environment-friendly products are safe to use. As a result, green marketing has emerged, which aims at marketing sustainable and socially-responsible products and services. Now is the era of recyclable, non-toxic and environment-friendly goods. This has become the new mantra for marketers to satisfy the needs of consumers and earn better profits.

Green marketing is the process of developing products and services and promoting them to satisfy the customers who prefer products of good quality, performance and convenience at affordable cost, which at the same time do not have a detrimental impact on the environment. It includes a broad range of activities like product modification, changing the production process, modified advertising, change in packaging, etc., aimed at reducing the detrimental impact of products and their consumption and disposal on the environment. Companies all over the world are striving to reduce the impact of products and services on the climate and other environmental parameters. Marketers are taking the cue and are going green.

Green marketing was given prominence in the late 1980s and 1990s after the proceedings of the first workshop on Ecological marketing held in Austin, Texas (US), in 1975.

Several books on green marketing began to be published thereafter. According to the Joel makeover (A writer, speakers and strategist on clean technology and green marketing), green marketing face a lot of challenges because of lack of standards and public consensus to what constitutes "Green". The green marketing has evolved over a period of time. According to Peattie (2001), the evolution of green marketing has three phases. First phase was termed as "Ecological" green marketing, and during this period all marketing activities were concerned to help environment problems and provide remedies for environmental problems. Second phase was "Environmental" green marketing and the focus shifted on clean technology that involved designing of innovative new products, which take care of pollution and waste issues. Third phase was "Sustainable" green marketing. It came into prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000.

Green marketing is a vital constituent of the holistic marketing concept. It is particularly applicable to businesses that are directly dependent on the physical environment; for example, industries like fishing, processed foods, tourism and adventure sports. Changes in the physical environment may pose a threat to such industries. Many global players in diverse businesses are now successfully implementing green marketing practices.

Marketing Mix Of Green Marketing

When companies come up with new innovations like eco friendly products, they can access new markets, enhance their market shares and increase profits. Just as we have 4Ps product prices, place and promotion in marketing, we have 4ps in green marketing too, but they are a bit different. They are buttressed by three additional Ps, namely people, planet and profits.

Product

The products have to be developed depending on the needs of the customers who prefer environment friendly products. Products can be made from recycled materials or from used goods. Efficient products not only save water, energy and money, but also reduce harmful effects on the environment. Green chemistry forms the growing focus of product development. The marketer's role in product management includes providing product designers with market-driven trends and customer requests for green product attributes such as energy saving, organic, green chemicals, local sourcing, etc., For example, Nike is the first among the shoe companies to market itself as green. It is marketing its Air Jordan shoes as environment-friendly, as it has significantly reduced the usage of harmful glue adhesive. It has designed this variety of shoes to emphasize that it has reduced wastage and used.

Price

Green pricing takes into consideration the people, planet and profit in a way that takes care of the health of employees and communities and ensures efficient productivity. Value can be added to it by changing its appearance, functionally and through customization, etc. Wal Mart unveiled its first recycled cloth shopping bag. IKEA started charging consumers when they opted for plastic bags and encouraged people to shop using its "Big Blue Bag".

Place

Green place is about managing logistics to cut down on transportation emissions, thereby in effect aiming at reducing the carbon footprint. For example, instead of marketing an imported mango juice in India it can be licensed for local production. This avoids shipping of the product from far away, thus reducing shipping cost and more importantly, the consequent carbon emission by the ships and other modes of transport.

Promotion

Green promotion involves configuring the tools of promotion, such as advertising, marketing materials, signage, white papers, web sites, videos and presentations by keeping people, planet and profits in mind. British petroleum (BP)

displays gas station which its sunflower motif and boasts of putting money into solar power. Indian Tobacco Company has introduced environmental-friendly papers and boards, which are free of elemental chlorine. Toyota is trying to push gas/electric hybrid technology into much of its product line. It is also making the single largest R & D investment in the every-elusive hydrogen car and promoting itself as the first eco-friendly car company. International business machines Corporation (IBM) has revealed a portfolio of green retail store technologies and service to help retailers improve energy efficiency in their IT operations. The center piece of this portfolio is the IBM SurePOS 700, a point-of-sale system that, according to IBM, reduces power consumption by 36% or more. We even see the names of retail outlets like "Reliance Fresh", Fresh@Namdhari Fresh and Desi, which while selling fresh vegetable and fruits, transmit an innate communication of green marketing.

Green marketer can attract customers on the basis of performance, money savings, health and convenience, or just plain environmental friendliness, so as to target a wide range of green consumers.

Consumers awareness can be created by spreading the message among consumers about the benefits of environmental-friendly product. Posting of profiles related to green marketing on social networks creates awareness within and across online peer groups. Marketing can also directly target the consumers through advertisements for product such as energy saving compact fluorescent lamps, the battery - powered Reva car, etc.

Why is green marketing chosen by most markets?

Most of companies are venturing into green marketing because of the following reason:

Opportunity

In India, around 25% of the consumers prefer environmental-friendly products, and around 28% may be considered healthy conscious. Therefore, green marketers have diverse and fairly sizeable segments to cater to. The Surf Excel detergent which saves water (advertised with the message - "do bucket panni roz bachana") and the energy-saving LG consumers durables are examples of green marketing. We also have green buildings which are efficient in their use of energy, water and construction materials, and which reduce the impact on human health and the environment through better design, construction, operation, maintenance and waste disposal. In India, the green building movement, spearheaded by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) - Godrej Green business Center, has gained tremendous impetus over the last few years. From 20,000 sq ft in 2003, India's green building footprints is now over 25 million sq ft.

Social Responsibility

Many companies have started realizing that they must behave in an environment-friendly fashion. They believe both in achieving environmental objectives as well as profit related objectives. The HSBC became the world's first bank to go carbon-neutral last year. Other examples include Coca-Cola, which has invested in various recycling activities. Walt Disney World in Florida, US, has extensive waste management program and infrastructure in place.

Governmental Pressure

Various regulations rare framed by the government to protect consumers and the society at large. The Indian government too has developed a framework of legislations to reduce the production of harmful goods and by products. These reduce the industry's production and consumers' consumption of harmful goods, including those detrimental to the environment; for example, the ban of plastic bags in Mumbai, prohibition of smoking in public areas, etc.

Competitive Pressure

Many companies take up green marketing to maintain competitive edge. The green marketing initiatives by niche companies such as Body Shop and Green & Black have prompted many mainline competitors to follow suit.

Cost Reduction

Reduction of harmful waste may lead to substantial cost savings. Sometimes, many firms develop symbiotic relationship whereby the waste generated by one company is used by another as a cost-effective raw material. For example, the fly ash generated by thermal power plants, which would otherwise contributed to a gigantic quantum of solid waste, is used to manufacture fly ash bricks for construction purposes.

Benefits Of Green Marketing

Today's consumers are becoming more and more conscious about the environment and are also becoming socially responsible. Therefore, more companies are responsible to consumers' aspirations for environmentally less damaging or neutral products. Many companies want to have an early-mover advantage as they have to eventually move towards becoming green. Some of the advantages of green marketing are,

- It ensures sustained long-term growth along with profitability
- It saves money in the long run, though initially the cost is more.
- It helps companies market their products and services keeping the environment aspects in mind. It helps in accessing the new markets and enjoying competitive advantage.
- Most of the employees also feel proud and responsible to be working for an environmentally responsible company.

Problems Of Green Marketing:

Many organizations want to turn green, as an increasing number of consumers' want to associate themselves with environmental-friendly products. Alongside, one also witnesses confusion among the consumers regarding the products. In particular, one often finds distrust regarding the credibility of green products. Therefore, to ensure consumer confidence, marketers of green products need to be much more transparent, and refrain from breaching any law or standards relating to products or business practices.

Paths Of Greenness

Green marketing involves focusing on promoting the consumption of green products. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the companies to adopt creativity and insight, and be committed to the development of environment-

friendly products. This will help the society in the long run. Companies which embark on green marketing should adopt the following principles in their path towards "greenness."

- Adopt new technology /process or modify existing technology/process so as to reduce environmental impact.
- Establish a management and control system that will lead to the adherence of stringent environment safety norms.
- Using more environment-friendly raw materials at the production stage itself.
- Explore possibilities of recycling of the used products so that it can be used to offer similar or other benefits with less wastage.

Marketing Strategie

The following strategies for green marketing include:

- Marketing Audit (including internal and external situation analysis)
- Develop a marketing plan outlining strategies with regard to 4 Ps
- Implement marketing strategies
- Plan results evaluation

Conclusion

A clever marketer is one who not only convinces the consumer, but also involves the consumer in marketing his product. Green marketing should not be considered as just one more approach to marketing but has to be pursued with much greater vigor, as it has an environmental and social dimension to it. With the threat of global warming looming large, it is extremely important that green marketing becomes the norm rather than an exception or just a fad. Recycling of paper, metals, plastics, etc., in a safe and environmentally harmless manner should become much more systematized and universal. It has to become the general norm to use energy-efficient lamps and other electrical goods.

Marketers also have the responsibility to make the consumers understand the need for and benefits of green products as compared to non-green ones. In green marketing, consumers are willing to pay more to maintain a cleaner and greener environment. Finally, consumers, industrial buyers and suppliers need to pressurize effects on minimize the negative effects on the environment-friendly. Green marketing assumes even more importance and relevance in developing countries like India.

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