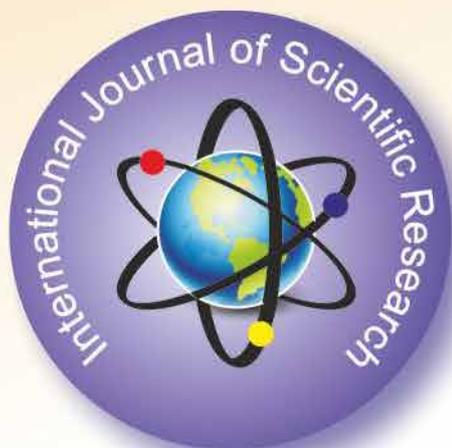


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Green Initiatives for Reducing Carbon Footprint



Environment Science

KEYWORDS : Green Marketing, Balanced ecosystem, Global Warming, Eco-friendly products, Environment conservation

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ABSTRACT

With the threat of global warming looming large, there is an imperative need to take steps to reduce carbon footprint. This research study looks at the impact of economic liberalization on Indian consumer behaviour and suggests strategies for retarding global warming through green initiatives.

1. Introduction

Global warming and climate change is a reality. Average mean temperature has been rising over the years. Tsunamis and other catastrophic incidents with huge casualties are testimony to global warming.

During the twentieth century, the average global temperature increased by about 10 F. Scientists estimate that by the end of the twenty-first century the average global temperature will increase by approximately 2.50 F to 10.50 F. Global warming is the result of surging population, deforestation, burning of natural gas, coal and oil, land use changes, etc. Carbon Dioxide emission is a big concern the world over. Its level in the atmosphere is increasing by more than 10% every 20 years.

Scientists say that even a small increase in the global temperature would lead to significant climate and weather changes, affecting cloud cover, precipitation, wind patterns, frequency and severity of storms, and the duration of seasons. This is evident from the many cyclones and hurricanes with increasing ferocity the world over.

Temperature rise lead to rise in sea levels, resulting in flooding along coastlines reducing fresh water supplies. There is risk of many endangered species becoming extinct with rising temperatures forcing their habitat change. Deforestation adversely affects the eco-systems.

2. Green Marketing



Green Marketing is a holistic marketing model wherein production, marketing, consumption and disposal of products and services happen in a manner that is less harmful to environment. With growing awareness about implications of global warming, non-biodegradable solid waste, harmful impacts of pollutants, etc., both marketers and consumers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the need for switching to green products and services.

It includes a broad range of activities like product modification, product process changes, modified advertising, changes in packaging, etc., and aimed at reducing the detrimental impact of products and their consumption and disposal on the environment.



3. Objectives of the study

- i) Study effects of economic liberalization in India
- ii) Suggest strategies for promoting green marketing

4. Research Methodology

Data / information for the research study were gathered from secondary published sources viz., books, newspapers, marketing periodicals, web sites, etc.

5. Findings of the Study

5.1 Effects of Economic Liberalization in India on use of traditional eco-friendly products

Indian people have traditionally been environment friendly as can be seen from the following:

- extensive use of biogas in rural areas
- use of bamboo furniture at home and office
- use of earthen ware pottery for cooking
- use of traditional 'matka' and 'surai' for cool drinking water instead of refrigerator
- use of reusable steel utensils instead of disposable plates
- use of coolers instead of air conditioners

However, the economic liberalization since 1990s brought fundamental shifts in Indian consumer psyche and spending. Manufacturers in US and Europe found a huge virgin market for their products and resorted to all means to increase sales in India to boost their bottom-line. This is further hastened by western influence resulting in concomitant lifestyle changes blurring the use of traditional environment friendly products. People especially the younger generation are increasingly taking to products and services which have harmful effects on environment. Consumers spending on personal care products, automobiles, etc. have increased phenomenally in the last two decades. Increased demand for housing resulted in a booming and unrestrained growth in real estate.

Alongside the rich and wealthy, lifestyles of the growing middle class in India is changing rapidly. Dressing style, eating habits, mobility, etc. are at once becoming important. Emergence of urban middle class with higher purchasing power has driven demand, while the developments of urban retail infrastructures have widened the availability of lifestyle products. Air conditioners, microwaves, two wheelers, automobiles are no longer considered luxury items. In non-metros, consumer electronics and durables are no longer considered high ticket items. Apparel, watches and perfumes are hitting a high note. First time consumers are lured by exotic products though their take home utility is minimal.

Contradictions and confusion too abound in the market scene. People have become health conscious but are not averse to eating junk food. They are aware of dangers of pollution but prefer to own vehicle instead of relying on public transportation. Manufacturers want to grow fast and tend to take advantage of the consumers psyche.

5.2 Strategies for Promoting Green Marketing

Promoting eco-friendly products must include all stakeholders. While government should bring about necessary policy shifts, manufacturers and services sectors should involve directly in

promoting green products and services. Both however have the stupendous task of educating people to take to environment friendly products and services. Strategies for making a positive impact in green marketing initiatives are given below.

5.2.1 Government

- Government should act as catalyst for promoting and creating awareness about global warming and consequent climate changes not only through legislation but also through suitable regulatory measures.
- Carry out sustained campaign through media for creating awareness about global warming pointing out the high perceived risk in the form of climate change, food scarcity and water shortage that may result if people continued to purchase conventional non-green products thereby helping to change consumers mindset and motivate them to buy and use green products.
- Green products, especially in consumer durables category viz., automobiles and personal care products, are expensive which deters consumers from buying them. Government can provide tax breaks and subsidies to genuine green products' manufacturers. Tax holiday for fixed period may be given to manufacturers to develop and promote green initiatives.
- Green certification and labeling should be made mandatory for all product categories that impact climate change and global warming. Government should bring in relevant environment regulations. Buildings should be green audited and rated based on the eco-friendly materials used, energy saving devices used, extent of greenery available, waste water recycling, rain water harvesting, etc.
- Cars that are environment friendly should carry green stickers issued by certified certification agencies. Electrical and electronic goods should be rated by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency or similar such agencies based on extent of energy saved.
- Recycling paper, metals, plastics, etc., in a safe and environmentally harmless manner should become much more systematized and universal. It has to become general norm to use energy-efficient lamps and other electrical goods. Government should therefore make it mandatory for manufacturers and services sector to use energy efficient systems to reduce power consumption, recycling of waste, proper disposal of waste, rainwater harvesting, etc.
- Corporate social responsibilities should include green initiatives.

5.2.2 Manufacturers and Services Sector

- Manufacturers must target high-end consumers to begin with and influence them to buy green products and services. This will help them in targeting other market segments for achieving mass consumption of green products in the long run.
- Marketers should induce consumers to buy green products by giving free samples, free demonstration of green products and prove to consumers that green products provide same functions and services as conventional products while at the same time help reduce global warming. A tea manufacturing company can organize road shows for promoting green tea by serving hot tea in recycled disposable cups and sample sachets for free trials at home with their family.
- Use tele-marketing for promoting green products. Customers can be educated on the benefits of using green products and show to consumers that the functions of green products are similar if not better than the conventional products. Discounts can be given for purchases through tele-marketing.

- Five stars rated air conditioners costs more than the conventional ones, though the recurring electricity costs of star rated air conditioners are lower. People are put off by the initial high cost of the air conditioners and are unwilling to pay a higher price for the eco-friendly air conditioners. A 100 gm KDHP (Munnar, Kerala) green tea costs Rs.50 at which price one can get 250 gms of non-green tea.. Eco-friendly bamboo laptop by Asus Technology costs around Rs.1lac while conventional laptop costs one-third the price. The eco-friendly bath soap such as Nalam / Bon costs Rs.50 for 100 gms which is twice the price of regular toilet soaps in the mid-price category. For the prices to come down the demand has to increase. For that to happen, manufacturers have to initially target the HIGs and the metro / urban population. This will help in market penetration eventually paving way for price reduction of green products.
- Manufacturers may reward sales outlets who promote green initiatives. Sales outlets in turn may provide incentives to their staff for increasing sales of green products. Showrooms may prominently display photographs of best sales persons who promote green products.
- RBI may permit banks to give concessions in interest rates for loans to green product manufacturers for R & D. Interest concessions may be given for manufacturing green products. Banks may give concessions in consumer loans to individual customers for purchasing eco-friendly products. All these can help the green products to take off providing the necessary impetus for popularizing them. As sales pick up and competition intensifies in green products, prices will start falling making green products amenable for wider market acceptance leading to mass consumption.
- SHGs can promote green initiatives in rural areas. Manufacturers can promote eco-friendly personal care products like soap, toothpaste, etc. through self help groups by price subsidy. This would help get foothold among rural people, thereby helping to generate volumes.

6. Conclusion

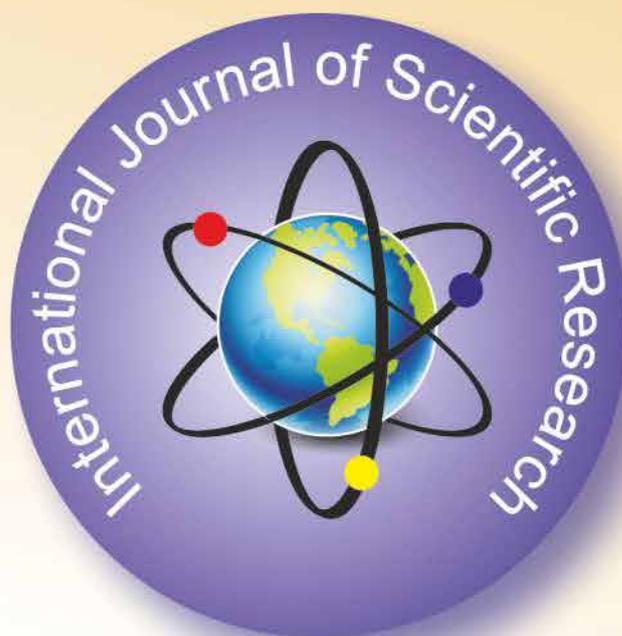
Global warming and Carbon footprint are technical subjects involving carbon emissions, green house gases, etc. which are difficult for general consumers to comprehend. Therefore, the green marketing advertisements should concentrate more on social impact of global warming such as food and water scarcity, health issues, etc. rather than on the technical aspects. Simple and easy to understand advertisements can help people change to green products.

Schools should be the starting point for sowing seeds of green initiatives. School curricula should include global warming and related issues. Teachers and school children from primary to secondary sections should be sensitized to environment protection. Competitions may be organized among children on the theme of environment protection which will engage both the parents as well as their children.

Government and manufacturers must resort to 'carpet bombing' for promoting use of green products so as to reduce the carbon footprint. Apart from conventional channels of communication like newspapers, radio, TV, etc. unconventional media such as bus tickets, boarding passes, stickers, hoardings, street plays, etc. should be used to create awareness about global warming and promoting green products. In this, the initiative of the Times of India, "Take Care, Take Charge" is worthy of note. It is an initiative to involve the general public in green initiative.

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