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GREEN MARKETING: PREVALENT ATTITUDES AND STRATEGIES

Megha Vashishth

Abstract: Nowadays, environmentalism has become a prominent topic in business processes. Initially from the procurement of materials till the delivery of the products to its ultimate consumers comes under this concept. Corporate as well as the consumers are well aware and concerned about the production and utilization of ecologically compatible products. There is a growing demand for products that are safer and minimize the harmful impact on our planet. The study of Green marketing reflects an interest in becoming more aware of ecological and sustainability issues and consistently working to achieve higher levels of sustainability. Sustainability initiatives are being developed to address a host of situations in which efforts are focused on current development without repercussions for future generations (Dahlstorm, p. 6-7). This paper focuses on the consumers' as well as the company's attitude towards green marketing. The paper identifies the green initiatives undertaken by the company's and the various associated advantages and challenges.

Keywords: Sustainability, Green Consumers, Eco Friendly, Ecolables.

1. INTRODUCTION

Green Marketing is the study of all efforts to consume, produce, distribute, promote, package and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological manner. This definition also recognizes the need to consider the production, distribution and reclamation of products as integrated components of the marketing effort (Dahlstrom, p. 5-6). There are several aspects where the concept of Green marketing is applied i.e. Materials Analysis, Manufacturing Processes, Sustainable Designing, Green Packaging, Usage Evaluation and Biodegrading the product. Green marketing incorporates a broad range of activities, including product modification, changes to the production process, packaging changes, as well as modifying advertising. "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 (Mishra, & Sharma, 2010, p. 9).

GREEN CONSUMERS:

Businesses are targeting those consumers who are sensitive to the environmental issues. Such consumers are defined as the Green Consumers. The late 1980s marked the first stage of green marketing, when the concept of "green marketing" was newly introduced and discussed in the industry. Strong marked the following phase starting mid-1990s where consumers started becoming more and more environmentally and socially aware. Awad (2011) has defined Green consumers as ... those who avoid products that are likely to endanger the health of the consumer or others; cause significant damage to the environment during manufacture, use or disposal; consume a disproportionate amount of energy; cause unnecessary waste; use materials derived from threatened species or environments.

The consumers of the green brands use mostly the functional attributes of the green product that are related to its performance, and they derive from it a "functional benefit" that makes them experience "environmental care" during their use for the product. The green products consumers experience "experiential benefits" which results in satisfying their needs to contribute to the welfare of the society (Mourad, 2012, p. 516).

WHY GREEN MARKETING:

The concept of green marketing has favorable implications over the Consumers and the Organization as well. Promotion of green technology and green products is necessary for conservation of natural resources and sustainable development (Mishra, & Sharma, 2010, p. 10). Government also plays a vital role in protecting the interests of consumers and environment. A lot of ecolabels have been introduced in India to encourage the manufacturers as well as consumers to go for the products which are less harmful for the environment and themselves also. E.g. Best Acquired Products (BAP), The Better Environmental Sustainability Targets (BEST), Bio Suisse, Bonsucro, Carbon Neutral Certification, Earth Check, Ecomark, Ecocert, GEO Certified, Nature Label, TCO certified, UPS Carbon Neutral, WQA Gold Seal etc. (Ecolabels, 2014). Many companies worldwide have gone beyond environmental compliance and transformed their entire business operations to be eco-efficient to gain competitive advantage over their competitors (Mourad, 2012, p. 514). It is the social responsibility of the organizations also to admire and protect the quality of environment and being helpful in making our planet a safer place to live.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH GREEN MARKETING:

Green marketing is about making the society aware about the green opportunities present in the market which is helpful for the sustainable development of the nation. But along with a lot of benefits associated with green marketing it also assumes several challenges:

- 1.Trust: While promoting the green products it is essential for the organizations to built credibility in consumer's perception regarding the quality of the product. E.g. McDonald's replaced its clam shell packaging with waxed paper because of increased consumer concern relating to polystyrene production and Ozone depletion (Mishra, & Sharma, 2010).
- 2.Costly: The ecofriendly products cost higher than the other similar brands. E.g. Tetra Pack juices are much costlier as compared to the other brands. A large scale of consumers is still not able to afford such costly products. If the green products are priced very high then again it will lose its market acceptability (Mishra, & Sharma, 2010, p. 10).
- 3.Long term perspective: The concept of green marketing may not serve benefits to the organization in short run while in long run it provides an eco friendly and sustainable image in the market.
- 4.High Initial Investment: While introducing the concept of green products in the product or service line it leads to E.g. the cost of installing solar energy is an investment in future energy cost savings. Basically, three kinds of green strategies are adopted by the firms i.e. New green products, Recycled/refurbished products; and. the Green Process. (Borin, Mullikin, & Krishnan, 2013, p. 120). All these strategies require huge initial investments.

ORGANIZATIONS ADOPTING GREEN MARKETING STRATEGIES:

- 1.HCL ecoSafe is targeted at integrating environmental management procedures into its business processes thereby protecting the environment, health, and safety of all its stakeholders. HCL commits to manufacture products that are environment friendly in all respects and are free from hazardous chemicals. HCL ecoSafe focuses on product lifecycle management to ensure that our products right from when they are manufactured, bought by customers, recovered at their end-of-life and recycled after useful life is done in an environmentally responsible manner (Prasad, 2009). All HCL products have been incorporated with Green PC features and ACPI mode for power saving. HCL in communicating material restriction has a comprehensive escalation process for its supply chain to ensure that suppliers do not use restricted substances or use substances in their recommended safe limits only. The chemical management policy covers materials /substances that have been banned or restricted for product manufacturing, seeing their negative effect on the environment. HCL has encouraged its supplier community to comply with its targets for phasing out of such substances, giving strict time lines, so that HCL can meet its commitments. HCL's 'E-Waste Policy' aims at providing efficient and easy product recovery options to its consumers to facilitate responsible product retirement of all its manufactured EEE products. They take appropriate care in, designing and production of products that facilitate dismantling and recovery/reuse (HCL ecosafe, 2012).
- 2.Nike aims to eliminate noxious adhesives with its considered line which is targeted towards "deep green" consumers with innovative design that eliminates the need for excess lining and reinforcement (Ottman, 2010). A shoe box which will use 30% less material than a 1995 vintage box was discovered. These fully recycled and recyclable boxes will aid in saving 200,000 trees annually and the box will be used by Nike in 2011. Nike outsourced the retail bag business only to the printers that were certified by FSC (Forest Stewardship Council). At the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Nike introduced environmentally friendly national team kits (Krishnani, n.d.).
- 3.Dell has introduced two new initiatives designed to promote a green approach towards technology adoption for consumers in India discount coupons and the Dell Go Green Challenge. They have a strategy called "Go green with Dell" to sell these products in the market. Recycling Discount Coupon was introduced to encourage PC recycling among its consumers; consumers in India who send their old systems to Dell for free recycling will be eligible for special discount coupons toward the purchase of their next Dell system. This coupon, offering a discount of Rs. 1000, may be used toward the purchase of any Dell system purchased directly from Dell for any of its product lines. Available globally, Dell has now extended its free recycling program for consumers in India to accept computers from any vendor (Go Green Initiatives, 2010).

4. Researchers from IBM and the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology have made a nanomedicine breakthrough in which they converted common plastic materials like polyethylene terephthalate (PET) into non-toxic and biocompatible materials designed to specifically target and attack fungal infections (Calif, 2013). The company introduced new services, technologies and financing to help enterprises bridge the gap between the mandate for Chief Information Officers (CIOs) to build "greener" technology infrastructures that can meet growing business requirements and the desire of Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) to realize rapid financial benefits from such investments. Project Big Green is a critical part of IBM's new enterprise data center strategy which focuses on best practices in virtualization, green IT, service management, security and cloud computing. IBM scientists have developed a method to cool computer chips that have circuits and components stacked on top of each other with tiny rivers of water, an advance that promises to significantly reduce energy consumed by data centers. In addition, IBM service researchers are now applying Component Business Modeling (CBM) to the environmental space, particularly with regard to reducing carbon footprint (Armonk, 2008).

5. McDonald's Austria achieves an overall 95 percent recycling rate in its restaurants with the McRecycle® program. McDonald's Canada's switch to unbleached napkins and bags leads to positive environmental, customer and cost savings impacts. McDonald's entire fleet of supply trucks in the UAE currently run on 100 percent biodiesel made from vegetable oil recycled from McDonald's restaurants. Besides purchasing green energy, McDonald's Portugal is generating green energy from solar power. In cooperation with its franchisees, the company is outfitting its restaurants with photovoltaic panels. As of 2012, McDonald's Portugal has rooftop installations on 14 restaurants. With its photovoltaic installations, McDonald's Portugal is contributing to the national renewable energy production goals. In Japan 13 types of energy-saving equipment were introduced to achieve a 25-percent reduction in CO₂ e.g. LED lighting, Conversion from GHP to EHP, Indoor air circulation units, Heat-shielding paint, Capture jets, Cogeneration waste heat usage, Solar power, Duct inverters, Heat pump water heaters, Energy-saving belts, Inverter refrigerators/freezers, Power monitoring units, Voltage drop control units etc. (Global Best of Green, 2012). A lot of other environmental initiatives have also been adopted by McDonald's.

6. Coca Cola has also undergone a no. of green initiatives to The company has just introduced the Plant Bottle, a partially bio-plastic bottle that is up to 30% plant material and 100% recyclable. Coca-Cola recently committed to eliminate the use of hydrofluorocarbon gases in all its new vending machines and coolers by 2015 (Shapiro, 2010). So far the company has distributed more than 10 billion fully recyclable packages made of plant based materials. Coca-Cola reports that 5 percent of its packaging material comes from recycled or renewable materials. 37 percent of bottles and cans sold by Coca-Cola are recycled. The goal is 50 percent recovery by 2015 (GMC, 2012).

7. The Body Shop is another company which differentiated itself from competitors through its ingredients and manufacture. Although all its ingredients are naturally-based, colourings and preservatives also go into containers. To educate consumers about its products, The Body Shop first informs its own personnel about ingredients, then arms them with a detailed reference book, and supports them with product information cards spread around its retail stores (Mirvis, 1994, p. 87).

CONCLUSION:

World-wide evidence indicates people are concerned about the environment and are changing their behaviour accordingly. As a result there is a growing market for sustainable and socially responsible products and services. Customers are usually ready to pay premium price for green products. Green marketing strategies may not be so beneficial in short run while in long run it proves to be advantageous to the firm, consumers as well as the environment.

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