

A study of Consumer Awareness and Perception towards Green Marketing in Bongaigaon Town, Assam

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Abstract

As the world's economy is rapidly developing, the global environment is increasingly deteriorating. Protecting environment, creating a safe living environment has become one of the most important concerns of consumers. Green marketing generally aims to promote environmentally friendly products and a safe environment where people could stay. There has been a change in consumer attitudes towards a green lifestyle. People are actively trying to reduce their impact on the environment. However, this is not widespread and is still evolving. Organizations and business however have seen this change in consumer attitudes and are trying to gain an edge in the competitive market by exploiting the potential in the green market industry. Customer's attitudes are changing towards the environment to encourage innovation for conservation and the benefits from this source of innovation are certain to outlive our current generation. The current study introduced the concept of green marketing and looks into the various ways in which the different consumer attributes are related to the concept of green marketing. A structured questionnaire with a five point balanced Likert scale for measuring consumer attitude towards green marketing has been used. This study based on analytical and description in nature. The data have been collected primarily through both questionnaire and schedule method from the respondents are tabulated and analyzed into logical statements using percentage; mean score analysis for finding the perception and awareness of people regarding the Go green concept in semi-urban areas, i.e., Bongaigaon Town, Assam.

Keywords: Awareness, Perception, Green Marketing

JEL Classification: M31

Introduction

Today the concept of sustainability is almost ubiquitous by showing application in corporate strategy, consumer choice, student education and academic research. The need for sustainable business practices by corporations around the world is identified to be a result of overall increase in the consumer awareness of lack of environmental protection and social inequities. Over the last decade environmentalism has emerged to be a vital aspect due to increasing issues related to acid rains, depletion of the ozone layer, and degradation of the land and many more pressing environmental issues. Successful

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marketing has always been about recognising trends and positioning products, services and brand in a manner that supports buyer intentions. "Green" marketing has moved from a trend to a way of doing business and businesses that sell should recognise (a) the value of going green and (b) incorporating this message into their marketing program and communicating the green concept to their consumers. According to the American Marketing Association green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. At present, green marketing is widely becoming a phenomenon throughout the world as concerns towards environment have begun in the past few decades. Compared to consumers in the developed countries, the Indian consumer has much less awareness of global warming issues. Green is slowly and steadily becoming the symbolic colour of eco-consciousness in India. The growing consumer awareness about the origin of products and the concern over impending global environmental crisis there are increasing the opportunities to marketers to convince consumers.

Phase of green marketing

First phase was termed as "Ecological" green marketing, and during this period all marketing activities were focused to help environment problems and provide remedies for environment 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. The need of the green marketing can be stated as follows:

- In the recent times issues like global warming and depletion of ozone umbrella which are detrimental for healthy survival has cropped up.
- Every person rich or poor is interested in quality life full of health and vigor.
- Financial gains and economic profit are the main aims of any corporate business. But harm to environment at the cost of sustainable business across the globe is realized now through off late.
- This sense is building corporate citizenship in the business class. So green marketing by the business class is still in the selfish anthropological perspective of long term sustainable business to please the consumer and obtain the license from the governing body.
- Industries in Asian countries are catching the need of green marketing from the developing countries but still there is a wide gap between their understanding and implementation.

Profile of the Study Area

Bongaigaon, one of the important cities in the state of Assam of India, spans across Bongaigaon and Chirang district. The city is one of the biggest commercial and industrial hubs of Assam and North-East India. Bongaigaon also acts as the gateway of North-East Frontier Railway Zone with its New Bongaigaon Junction railway station, the second biggest railway station in North-East India. Bongaigaon is the administrative headquarters and municipal board of Bongaigaon district.

It was the last capital of the Kamatapur Kingdom and home to many historical monuments of Assamese culture. The city, divided into two parts – Old Bongaigaon and New Bongaigaon - is situated 180 kilometres north west of Guwahati, largest city of Assam. The Bongaigaon Town Committee was first constituted in the year 1961 and was upgraded to a Municipal Board in the year 1977. Presently, the Municipal Area consists of 25 nos. of wards covering an area of 14.31 sq m. The population of the city is 109,810 with density 7,800/km². There are many departmental stores and shopping malls etc. have established and others malls have been growing from last 2 to 3 years.

Review of Literature

Green marketing is applied to consumer goods, industrial goods and even services like eco-tourism. Companies that develop new and improved products and services with environmental impacts in mind give themselves access to new markets, substantially increase profits and enjoy competitive strategies over those marketing no environmentally responsible alternatives. The main problem in green marketing is that firms should ensure that their activities are not misleading the consumers. Green marketing claims should always be genuine and state the environmental characteristics and benefits. Competitive pressures and increased costs are some of the other problems (Singh 2008). Green marketing means greening products as well as greening firms and it has examined issues such as what needs to be greened (products, systems or processes), why consumers purchase / do not purchase green products and how firms should think about information disclosure strategies on environmental claims. Consumer apathy to green products is due to many factors, including scarce information about levels of greenness, lack of credibility of firms' claims and the tendency to free ride. Firms should not advertise products' environmental benefits unless such claims can be credibly substantiated (Prakash 2002). Consumers with high involvement and high perceived consumer effectiveness will display highest levels of attitude-behaviour consistency (Intentionally green consumers). Those with low involvement and high perceived consumer effectiveness will display high levels of attitude – behaviour inconsistency (Idealist consumer). Consumers with low involvement and low perceived consumer effectiveness exhibit high levels of attitude-behaviour consistency (Accidental purchase). Those with high involvement and low perceived consumer effectiveness will display high levels of attitude-behaviour inconsistency towards green product (Gupta & Ogden 2006). The present trends of green marketing in India, described the reason why companies are adopting it, future of green marketing and has concluded that green marketing is something that will continuously grow in both practice and demand. The need for standardisation and authenticity, lack of awareness, lack of patience and perseverance on the part of the marketers who expect immediate results were found to be the major challenges of green marketing. Customers are becoming more demanding and they have started to pay more attention to the environment. What is important with brands is how customers perceive them and what the image of the brand is. The aim of this study is to find out how consumer behavior is influenced by green marketing by companies (Roy 2013).

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the awareness, perception and importance of green marketing among the Customer of Bongaigaon town.
2. To exhibit the perception related to factors stimulating purchase of green products and purpose of using green products.

Methodology of the study

The present study is analytical and descriptive in nature. The data have been collected primarily through both questionnaire and schedule from the respondents at various places like shopping mall, departmental stores, and also local market in Bongaigaon town. The sample size of the present study is 84. A structured questionnaire with a five point balanced Likert scale for measuring consumer attitude towards green marketing has been used.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Awareness & Perception of Green Marketing among the Customers

SL No.	Factors	Percentage of Respondent					Mean Score
		SA	A	N	D	SDA	
1.	Aware of Green Marketing	63	17	12	5	3	4.32
2	Believe in the concept of green marketing	59	15	13	9	4	4.16
3	Aware about the benefits of using green products	57	12	5	17	9	3.91
4	Productivity can be improved drastically by using green product	53	14	9	16	8	3.88
5	Companies are unwilling in implementing green marketing concept	52	22	6	9	11	3.95
6	Government should take initiative in making companies to go green	48	32	5	10	5	4.08
7	Huge Investment is required to develop green product	38	43	8	4	7	4.01
8	Interested to know about green marketing	69	19	3	5	4	4.44
9	Difficult for all companies to produce green product	62	21	6	4	5	4.29
10	Green marketing is not only for green products it's all about go for environment cleanness, health safety and etc.	67	21	3	6	3	4.43

Note: Strongly Agree (5) = SA ; Agree (4) = A ; Neither Agree or Nor Disagree (3) = N; Disagree (2) = D; Strongly Disagree (1) = SDA

Source: Based on Field Survey

The data collected from the respondents are tabulated and analyzed into logical statements using percentage, mean score analysis. The data are tabulated and analyzed graphically with the help of MS Excel 2007.

Interpretation of Table 1 clearly depicts that Respondents said *strongly agree* that they believe in the concept of green marketing as the computed mean score is 4.32 and also infer consumers do have a strong belief about green marketing. Respondents Strongly Agree about the awareness of companies going green as the mean score is 3.95. This implies that consumers keep eye on the companies going green. That Respondents strongly agree that there is an advantage of green products as the mean score is 3.91. Respondents strongly agree that the productivity can be improved drastically by using green marketing as the mean score is 3.88. Respondents are of the view that green marketing can improvise on productivity. From the above table it cleared that customers have some good perception on Government for taking initiative on Green Marketing.

Table 2: Multiple Responses of Consumers on Stimulating Factors towards the Purchase of Green Products

Stimulating Factors	Response		Rank
	N	%	
Price	79	16.29	I
No chemical ingredients	40	8.25	VIII
Not polluting the environment	53	10.93	VI
Minimal package	72	14.85	III
Natural ingredients	55	11.34	V
Recycled/ Reusable	66	13.61	IV
Brand name	75	15.46	II
Convenience	45	9.27	VII
Total	485	100.00	-

Source: Based on Field survey

Table 2 explains the composition of multiple responses of the people of Bongaigaon Town with regard to the various stimulating factors which induce people to purchase green products. Based on the cumulative score of all the eight factors, two factors, namely, price and brand name stand first and second in the ranking and hence these factors seems to be the most important in stimulating people for the purchase of green products. Another three factors, namely, minimal package, Recycled/Reusable and natural ingredients ranked third, fourth and fifth respectively in motivating the people for purchase of green products. It can be concluded that certain brands are getting established in the market which attract the people and create awareness of green products among people. The researcher concludes that the price of green products is comparatively higher than the non green products, which

naturally instigate the people to believe in the purity and hygiene of the products. Moreover it also motivates them towards both purchase and usage of these products in the study area.

Findings

1. ***Consumer's Values/Beliefs, Attitudes towards Environmentally Friendly Products:*** No one strongly disagree, where three-fourth of the respondents strongly agree that they would choose eco friendly brands. Respondents reacted positively about buying brands which are less damaging to environment. However; the expectation of the customer is not away from the effective functioning of green brands as that of non green products.
2. ***Consumer Awareness:*** Majority consumers expressed that identifying environmentally products on the shelves of the store is slightly difficult. When asked, majority of the respondents are unable to name a specific product or product type which are eco-friendly. This speaks about the consumer unawareness of green brands.
3. ***Efforts of Marketing:*** Marketing plays a pivotal role in bringing consumer awareness. As the response show consumers would be more likely to choose environmentally friendly brands and were unable to recall green products/brands. This speaks about the gap in marketing effort put by the green marketers in bringing consumer awareness.
4. ***Trust and Product Performance:*** Survey reveals that the green product performance was significantly affected by environmental beliefs. Further, it is expressed by as large as of the respondents that they are likely to trust well known products and judge green products basing on their previous experience.

Conclusion

Given India's rapid GDP growth rate and the highly negative environmental impact, demand for eco-able products may create the necessary consumer pressure to ensure a cleaner environment. This study confirms the existence of an environmental value-action gap, a gap between consumers' beliefs and behaviors over being green. This paper has highlighted awareness and perception of green Products and market for Pro-environmental values are more likely to result in more pro-environmental behavior when values and beliefs are specific enough, the green action aligns with consumers' subjective interests, and product attributes are positively perceived. A major barrier in the purchasing of green products is: concern over whether the product will perform as expected. However, consumers generally trust the performance of well known brands, so green products that work well and do not make over inflated green claims could sell successfully under well-known brands. The current low levels of consumer awareness about global warming, India's brands need to help raise consumer consciousness. Indian manufacturers have yet to find a market for green products, even as consumers have a low awareness of them because of the insufficient efforts made by the marketers. But, by embracing the green imperative, and investing in green initiatives and consumer education, Indian brands can break this vicious

cycle. Overall, it is clear that the Bongaigaon market for greener products is under-exploitation by marketers within consumer groups with pro-environmental values. This finding suggests that there has customer they have well known about green marketing and green product for greater use of marketing brands to buy green products that are genuinely environmentally friendly in Bongaigaon Town. It seems that people who belong to the service category among occupation are more aware and willing to buy eco-friendly products.

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