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STUDY ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS ON CONSUMERS PURCHASING PATTERNS IN KOLKATA CITY

HINDOL ROY
RESEARCH SCHOLAR
CMJ UNIVERSITY
SHILLONG

ABSTRACT

Green marketing refers to such a product and service that may be environmentally friendly or packaged or produced in an environmentally friendly way. Green marketing premise that "Greenness" is a beneficial attribute and affect consumer preferences and buying patterns. Basically 5 reasons constitute the pillars which drive the marketer/producer into green marketing. They are opportunities of a competitive edge, corporate social responsibility, competitive pressure, Government pressure and cost and profit issues. However consumer preferences and perceived benefit remains at the core of all green marketing decisions. Whether it is governmental regulation or company decision the heightened level of awareness of the consumer has a role to play. The study aims to see if a higher level of concern for environmental issues influences purchasing patterns; an empirical research was conducted on three hundred and twenty people in the city of Kolkata. The study provided valuable insights into the environmental conscious customers as well as emerging trends and suggested appropriate strategies to implement green practices.

KEYWORDS

Environmental concerns and influences, green consumers, green marketing.

INTRODUCTION

There is a going consciousness around the world in regard to environment and its protection. Globally environment has come up as a prime concern and people are changing their purchase and consumption habits to accommodate a more sustainable lifestyle which in turn causes lesser damage to the environment.

Basically green marketing professes use of cleaner technology, lesser emissions, lesser environmental impact and products which consumes or uses lesser amount of scarce resources. Over the years there has been evolved a relationship among consumer behaviour, marketing and the environment. Such attention has been manifested in many ways and, there has been an increase in public awareness about environmental aspects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Business firms have also started engaging in activities that give publicity to such efforts with a view to generate bigger sales and revenues, and eventually higher profits for the organizations (Marsili, 2000). Initiatives taken by business firms to establish their green credentials range from repositioning of existing products without changing product composition (Davis, 1992), to modifying existing products to be less environmentally harmful.

(Ottman, 1992), creating profitable new or improved products and packages that balance consumers' needs with environmental considerations.

(Ottman, 1993), modifying the entire corporate culture to ensure that environmental issues are integrated into all operational aspects (McDaniel and Rylander, 1993); and setting up new business firms that target green consumers and exclusively produce green products (CHOICE, 1990).

Meffert and Kirchgeorg (1994, 1985) in this connection rightly observe that "various environmental management practices (such as implementing aggressive pollution-prevention programmes, initiating environment green products and process technologies) related performance measures and developing provide opportunities to the firms to strengthen their distinctive competence in terms of operational objectives such as the highest quality, lowest cost, best dependability and greatest flexibility".

Tikka et al. (2000, p. 16) found that 'knowledge of nature and the environment seemed to be dependent on gender' because the mean knowledge points scored by men were higher than those scored by women. In a recent study in Upper Egypt, Briggs et al. (2003) found that women's environmental knowledge are becoming more spatially restricted than those that many men possess. Environmental concern has been traditionally viewed as a unidimensional construct ranging from unconcerned about the environment at the low end to concerned at the high end, as measured by the new environmental paradigm (NEP) (Milfont and Duckitt, 2004). On the other hand, Schultz (2000) proposed that environmental concerns have three correlated factors: concern for the self (egoistic), other people (altruistic) and the biosphere (biospheric).

Kassarjian (1971) studied consumers' reaction towards a gasoline that reduced air pollution and found that attitude towards air pollution was the most important variable in determining consumers' behaviour towards the product. In a study conducted in Germany, Balderjahn (1988) found that a positive attitude towards ecologically conscious living resulted in ecologically responsible buying and using of products, including the use of automobiles. It also prompted consumers to publicly show environmental concern by signing ecologically relevant petitions and supporting or joining an anti-pollution organization.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

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

The main purpose of this study is to:

1. Weigh the environmental concerns and influences on consumers.

The other objectives of the study were to study the following:

1. The emerging dimensions of green consumers.

2. To know the information sources of green consumers

3. To suggest appropriate strategies to implement green practice.

METHODOLOGY**TYPE OF RESEARCH**

Exploratory

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED

Convenient judgmental sampling

DESIGN

A survey was employed to examine the hypothesized relationships between environmental concern level and behavior in purchasing green products. The questionnaire was divided into four parts: section 1 was used to gather demographic information about the respondents, section 2 was used to determine the

respondents' relative level of environmental concern, sections 3 and 4 were used to determine the respondents' general purchasing behavior in terms of environmentally friendly products, and section 3 was used again to gauge respondents' willingness to pay more for a green product.

After section 1, survey respondents were asked to respond to five questions regarding their level of concern about environmental issues. Each question was given on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree. The questions were designed so that a higher mean score indicated a higher level of concern.

Respondents were then asked questions regarding their general purchasing behavior in terms of green product attributes. A Likert scale was employed again, this time based on the frequency of the purchasing behavior in question. The questions were designed so that a higher score indicated a greater propensity towards purchasing green products. Reliability of questionnaire were checked with the help of Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.79$).

Validity checked by distributing questionnaire to field experts and resultantly four items were dropped.

PARTICIPANTS

Due to a lack of time and resources, a non-probability convenience sample was chosen to respond to the questionnaire. Participants included friends, associates, and colleagues of the researcher and general public. The research was confined to Kolkata city. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, of which 320 were completed and returned. The study was conducted between September 2011 and December 2011.

APPARATUS AND TOOLS USED FOR RESEARCH

The apparatus consisted of the questionnaire (see Appendix A), a computer, and software including Microsoft Excel and PHStat (a statistical analysis program). Tools used were Factor Analysis & One Way Analysis of Variance.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Surveys were distributed to respondents on a convenience basis, as the time available for selecting a sample was very limited. The researcher utilized the resources that were readily available within the allowable timeframe, including his friends, associates, and colleagues. Surveys were distributed in paper form. It is likely that this sample is not truly representative of a meaningful measurement parameter; however, it may provide valuable insight that could help guide further research.

RESULTS

Exploratory factor analysis with Principal Component Analysis and Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization extracted three components. Environmentally influenced and Aware Consumers, Skeptic, but system believer Consumers; Progressive and Eco friendly Consumers. (See Table 1 in appendices).

These three emergent consumer dimensions showed no significant difference for gender, sources of information. These dimensions also not shown significant difference for who can be effective tool in implementing green practices (like Govt., Manufacturers / Service providers and consumer itself). However Age wise there were significant difference for the first dimension i.e. Environmentally influenced and Aware Consumers. With advancement in their age consumers grow more confident in believing that environment influence on green practices.

The study revealed that the consumer's source the information for environment influence on green practices mostly from newspaper and television whereas magazines, friends and relatives contribute very less. Most of the respondents believed that government and consumers can be a major role player in effective implementation of green practices, but a few respondents believed that manufacturers / service providers should take responsibility.

The male consumers perceived that green packagings are rather to attract the buyers than contributing to the environmental friendly causes and they also think that competitive pressure compel the business organisations to take green initiatives. The male consumers are more consistent than female consumers in their rating on these issues.

With advancement in their age consumers become more consistent and certain about the environmental concerns and influences upon purchasing product, awareness about green idea, favourable response of eco-friendly attributes in product repositioning, usage of biodegradable products and recommendation of eco- friendly products for further use. Previous to this study Arcury (1990) suggested that an individual's gender may be a factor in the amount of environmental knowledge. The present study have entirely different result than what Gendall and Smith (1995) and Tikka et al. (2000) found that men tended to have higher levels of knowledge than women but for - Environmentally influenced and Aware Consumers, Skeptic but system believer Consumers and Progressive and Eco friendly Consumers no significant difference found for gender as a determinant for sources of information.

In our study Age wise there were significant difference found for the first dimension i.e. Environmentally influenced and Aware Consumers and it also confirmed the previous research findings (Roberts, 1996) (Samdahl and Robertson, 1989) but there was a significant and negative correlation found in other studies (Anderson, Henion, and Cox, 1974; Van Liere and Dunlap, 1981; Zimmer, Stafford and Stafford, 1994).

IMPLICATIONS

Environmental concerns and influences on Green consumers refer to the process of practicing-selling/using products and/or services based on their environmental benefits. The study points that such a product or service may be environmentally friendly in itself or produced and/or packaged in an environmentally friendly way can enhance the chances of a responsible, ethical and profitable business to grow in all areas with public, government and common man support.

The study raises the concerns for all business men that the greenness should represent the soul of business and profitability and it should be implemented in true sense rather than mere representation of being an environmentally concerned. The study reminds the government and consumers that they have to shoulder bigger responsibility and play a measure role rather than manufacturers / service provider to add value to healthy and prosperous human life.

CONCLUSION

Though this study was an attempt to look into the male and female perceptions, age, sources of information and role of Government, consumers and manufacturers/service providers on Environmental concerns and influences on Green consumers but future research can be on specific areas like green manufacturing process, green supply chain management and acceptance of more environmental concerned issues like packaging, nature and recycling standards.

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APPENDICES**TABLE 1: FACTOR ANALYSIS**

PURCHASE	0.738	0.467	0.153
PRICE HIGH	0.388	0.28	-0.176
ADAWR	0.49	0.412	0.101
ACTION	0.593	0.151	3.04E-03
INFLUENCE	0.532	0.129	0.12
ISO14000	-5.10E-03	0.715	-1.25E-02
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	6.31E-02	0.52	0.447
PDTREPSN	0.249	0.57	0.361
BAN POLYTHIN	0.775	0.238	-8.77E-02
RECYCLED	0.583	0.395	2.25E-02
OLD VEHICLE	0.449	2.19E-02	0.256
EURO NORMS	0.457	0.511	4.15E-02
KULHD	0.413	0.505	-0.191
BIODEGRADABLE	0.577	0.539	5.17E-02
FESTIVAL	0.582	0.442	-3.90E-02
POLLUTION CHECK	0.329	0.623	0.272
ECO MARK	6.54E-02	0.525	0.533
BLNCNEED	0.212	0.648	-0.124
GOVT	-9.29E-02	3.31E-02	0.829
COURT	0.145	0.255	0.655
AWARENESS	0.104	-0.312	0.758
ATTRACT	0.597	-6.51E-02	0.311
REALITY	0.711	5.22E-02	0.172
EXPENSIVE	0.69	0.121	-0.222
EXPERIENCE	0.674	0.313	7.21E-02
COMPETITION	0.406	3.49E-02	0.3

TABLE 2: AGE WISE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY
DESCRIPTIVES

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
FAC1	126	5.5192	.7656
21-35	<21	137	5.4422
>35	7	6.1429	.3959
Total	270	5.4963	.7794
FAC2	126	4.2540	.8863
21-35	<21	137	4.4327
>35	7	4.6327	.9719
Total	270	4.3545	.9499
FAC3	126	5.5146	.8506
21-35	<21	137	5.7092
>35	7	6.4048	.5258
Total	270	5.6364	.8253

TABLE 3: ANOVA AGE
ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FAC1 Between Groups	3.393	2	1.696	2.831	.061
Within Groups	160.006	267	.599		
Total	163.399	269			
FAC2 Between Groups	2.654	2	1.327	1.476	.230
Within Groups	240.069	267	.899		
Total	242.723	269			
FAC3 Between Groups	6.730	2	3.365	5.091	.007
Within Groups	176.495	267	.661		
Total	183.225	269			

TABLE 4: GENDERWISE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY
DESCRIPTIVE

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
FAC1 male	155	5.3640	.7259
female	115	5.6746	.8159
Total	270	5.4963	.7794
FAC2 male	155	4.3558	.9412
female	115	4.3528	.9656
Total	270	4.3545	.9499
FAC3 male	155	5.5968	.8423
female	115	5.6899	.8023
Total	270	5.6364	.8253

TABLE 5: ANOVA GENDER
ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FAC1 Between Groups	6.371	1	6.371	10.874	.001
Within Groups	157.028	268	.586		
Total	163.399	269			
FAC2 Between Groups	5.805E-04	1	5.805E-04	.001	.980
Within Groups	242.722	268	.906		
Total	242.723	269			
FAC3 Between Groups	.572	1	.572	.839	.360
Within Groups	182.653	268	.682		
Total	183.225	269			

ABBREVIATIONS

FAC1 - Environmentally influenced and Aware Consumers,

FAC2 - Skeptic but system believer Consumers;

FAC3 - Progressive and Eco friendly Consumers

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