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SWOT ANALYSIS ON GREEN MARKETING: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

Green marketing is considered as one of the major trends in modern businesses today (Kassaye, 2001). It has become a strategic marketing approach focusing on business endeavours (Ottman 2000). Almost all research studies in the field of green marketing unanimously endorsed a finding that green consumers are on the rise globally and it offers long term competitive advantage to the companies to innovate, engage and promote green life styles (Bukheni, 2011). The opportunities offered by the current green marketing stage of sustainable marketing may not be fully utilized unless the looming threats and weaknesses are effectively addressed by concerted efforts with an institutional mechanism at international level. The empirical investigation in the field of green marketing for the past thirty years has revolved around the areas of environmental awareness of consumers, the buying behaviour of green consumers and green marketing strategy adopted by companies. The contribution of the studies though somewhat valuable to the stakeholders, the basic issues of the emerging concept related to its weaknesses and threats remain unresolved. They were mostly theoretically discussed at intellectual circles and did not make much headway in addressing the grievances of green companies. By using SWOT Analysis the present paper makes an attempt at identifying the strengths and opportunities; and pinpointing the weaknesses and threats in an order of priority under the each component of the analysis, so that the policy makers and interested groups can act on priority basis by addressing the issues one by one. This would ensure uniform implementation of green policies at national and global level which in turn helps the green companies and marketers to move ahead with confidence and making the environment-friendly movement a great success. With this backdrop, the present study is undertaken. Therefore, it is an empirical investigation on the concept of green marketing.

KEYWORDS

Green Marketing, Green Strategy, SWOT Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

 Green marketing is considered as one of the major trends in modern businesses today (Kassaye, 2001). It has become a strategic marketing approach focusing on business endeavours (Ottman 2000). Almost all research studies in the field of green marketing unanimously endorsed a finding that green consumers are on the rise globally and it offers long term competitive advantage to the companies to innovate, engage and promote green life styles (Bukheni, 2011). It is now argued that green marketing is currently not achieving its potential and still in its infancy and lot of research is to be done to fully explore its potential. (Semmer.K.et.al., 2006). The opportunities offered by the current green marketing stage of sustainable marketing may not be fully utilized unless the looming threats and weaknesses are effectively addressed by concerted efforts with an institutional mechanism at international level. Green Washing, Green Myopia, lack of green standards and certification, eco labelling and erosion of faith among consumers on green claims are weakening the green marketing initiatives.

The empirical investigation in the field of green marketing for the past thirty years has revolved around the areas of environmental awareness of consumers, the buying behaviour of green consumers and green marketing strategy adopted by companies. The contribution of the studies though somewhat valuable to the stakeholders, the basic issues of the emerging concept related to its weaknesses and threats remain unresolved. They were mostly theoretically discussed at intellectual circles and did not make much headway in addressing the grievances of green companies. As a result companies like Coca Cola, McDonald and Wal-Mart are drifting away from their environmentally friendly behaviour and started building an image of socially responsive company as they couldn't adjust with the ground realities of green marketing. By using SWOT Analysis the present paper makes an attempt at identifying the strengths and opportunities; and pinpointing the weaknesses and threats; in an order of priority under the each component of the analysis, so that the policy makers and interested groups can act on priority basis by addressing the issues one by one. This would ensure uniform implementation of green policies at national and global level which in turn helps the green companies and marketers to move ahead with confidence and making the environment-friendly movement a great success. With this backdrop, the present study is undertaken. Therefore, it is an empirical investigation on the concept of green marketing.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Miles and Cavin (2000) argued that being a good environmental steward helps to create superior reputational and strategic advantage in firms' long term utility to create value. Polonsky (2000) stated that from the organization's point of view, the impact of green marketing is both internal and external. In the external environment, it affects the threats and opportunities for organizations, where as in internal environment it influences the strengths and weakness of organizations. Ottman (2006) pointed out that the consumer value positioning, caliberation of consumer knowledge and credibility of product claims are the biggest challenges to be met in the field of green marketing. The sustainability of internal reforms in the organization ensuring a "bridge between business and green" is challenging (Grant 2007). Mulchand Sen (2007) stated that the marketers need to understand the implications of Green Marketing. It is a golden goose, and can be a very powerful marketing strategy when it is done right. It was realized that environmental responsiveness is something that consumers, investors and other stakeholders take an intent and which provides opportunities for innovation and competitive advantage (Baker 2009). The study by Dharmendra Mehta (2011) indicated that Indians are not only conscious about their environment but also health conscious as well. This paradigm shift in attitude has made Indian consumers attractive to green marketers. It has made the population more responsive and aware towards green marketing appeals. The study by Saranya (2011) highlighted that the perception of green consumers on the extent of environmental friendliness of products in the minds of green consumers is said to have causing a vital impact on their purchasing decisions. Further they are also unlikely to compromise on traditional attributes such as convenience, availability, price, quality and performance. To meet this challenge there is no single green marketing strategy is right for every company to succeed. It is to be seen how companies handle this dilemmas associated with this growing field (Ginsberg and Bloom 2011). Green Washing is a serious threat to the green marketing companies which shattered the faith of the green consumers and lead them to believe that environmental claims are just marketing gimmicks (Kotler, 2011)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The uniqueness of the present research paper is that instead of investigating a research problem from its practical value, the concept itself is being subjected to research analysis. Green marketing being an emerging and promising concept, its potentiality and hurdles in its practical situations remain a subject of discussion

among ultimate consumers, academicians, researchers and marketers. Unless and otherwise the threatening issues of green marketing are tackled to the satisfaction of its stakeholders, taking forward this marketing strategy benefiting the consumers and the entire world as a whole would hardly be achieved. In this context, it is intended to subject this concept for an empirical investigation to address the issues in an order of priority by bodies and institutions active in the field of green movement.

OBJECTIVES

1. To stress the significance of green marketing in the present context.
2. To know the profile of sample respondent – academicians and executives taken for the study.
3. To identify specifically the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threads (SWOT Analysis) in an order of priority.
4. To offer suggestions based on the findings of the study.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Major companies have already started adopting green strategy and positioning themselves as green companies in the market. Starbucks is saving 1.7 million pounds of paper, 3.7 million pounds of solid waste and 1,50,000 trees a year in 13,168 stores using re-useable mugs. HSBC offering ‘Green’ checking account by promoting a bank card with green element recycled paper. Google has taken initiative to generate environmentally friendly energy by using wave power generator through the wave motion to power the on board data centre and filed a ‘patent’ for ‘Floating data centre’ and will cool this with water. Google sees the future of computing at sea. IKEA (Swedish longest home furnishing chain store) is committed to social programs by partnering with UNICEF for reducing child labour. But marketers and small companies not knowing exactly as to how to meet the challenges and tackle the issues relating to weaknesses and threats, have become half hearted and stood wayside. The present paper by pinpointing the issues in an order of priority seeking solutions from the highly powered policy makers. This would not only strengthen the green intentions of companies but also clear the skepticism surrounding the movement.

METHODOLOGY

The present investigation is unique in its content as being a concept is itself subjected to analysis. It is both descriptive and analytical study based on primary as well as secondary data. By using well – structured interview schedule, data from the respondents were collected and analyzed using SPSS 14.0. Statistical tools like Percentage Analysis and Garrett’s Ranking Technique are used for the analysis. Samples for the study are drawn from teaching faculty and practitioners i.e., company executives.

SAMPLING

Environmental concerns have been on the agendas of academia and industry for more than 30 years. It is therefore, decided to draw samples from these two segments for the study. The faculty works in the departments of Commerce and Management stream of five reputed colleges and company executives at the decision making level in the areas of production and marketing in Chennai city taken for the study. The said departments of five colleges namely Stella Maris College, New College, Madras Christian College, Presidency College, Ethiraj College and Loyola College and five companies namely TNPL, HCL, Mahendra and Mahendra, HUL and Wipro are taken for the study treated them as two separate clusters. The total population of two clusters stood at 64 comprising of 43 and 21 respectively. A sample of 20 from faculty and 10 from company executives were chosen to form a total sample size of 30. Hence, the cluster sampling technique with convenient selection of samples has been applied to the present study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample consists of two sets of respondents namely faculty and executives and their profile is presented in the following Table 1 & 2.

TABLE 1: PROFILE OF SAMPLE RESPONDENT-FACULTY AND COMPANY EXECUTIVES

Category	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Age Level	Upto 45	16	53.33
	Above 45	14	46.67
	Total	30	100.00
Gender	Male	19	63.33
	Female	11	36.67
	Total	30	100.00
Educational Qualification	Research Degree	18	60.00
	Provisional Degree	12	40.00
	Total	30	100.00
Number of Conferences, Seminars and High level meetings attended	Below 25	14	46.67
	Between 25 and 50	6	20.00
	Above 50	10	33.33
	Total	30	100.00

Source: Primary data

TABLE 2: PERIOD OF EXPERIENCE IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS

Category	Items						
	Teaching Faculty			Company Executives			
Period of Experience	Area of Teaching Experience	Frequency	%	Industry Experience	Frequency	%	
	Marketing philosophy			Marketing division			
	a) Upto 10 years	8		a) Upto 10 years	3		
	b) More than 10 years	4	12	60.00	b) More than 10 years	2	5
	Organizational/ consumer behaviour studies			Research and development department			
	a) Upto 10 years	4		a) Upto 10 years	2		
	b) More than 10 years	4	8	40.00	b) More than 10 years	1	3
				Policy making decisions			
				a) Upto 10 years	1		
				b) More than 10 years	1	2	
Total		20	100.00		10	100.00	

Source: Primary data

The variables / issues which are to be grouped under each component of SWOT analysis were identified from the pilot study undertaken initially. The identified issues were given to sample respondents to rank according to their priority under each component of SWOT analysis namely Strengths, Weaknesses,

Opportunities and Threats of green marketing. By referring the Garrett's Ranking table, mean scores were assigned to each variable and ranks were assigned accordingly. The results of the analysis are presented in Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6.

TABLE 3: STRENGTHS OF GREEN MARKETING

S.No	Variable	Mean Score	Ranks
1.	Support of people, NGO's, Governmental and Internal Bodies like UNESCO,	67.30	I
2.	Overwhelming support by environmentally conscious people.	62.17	II
3.	Promoting innovation in technology, products and services.	60.73	III
4.	Increasing green consumer base.	46.40	IV
5.	Increased recognition by companies as effective marketing tool to enhance their market share.	36.23	V
6.	Transforming into a mass movement.	25.14	VI

Source: Computed data

TABLE 4: WEAKNESSES OF GREEN MARKETING

S.No	Variable	Mean Score	Ranks
1.	Green Guides, 2012 only administrative and optional	66.83	I
2.	Effects of green marketing mostly indirect and not measureable.	62.00	II
3.	Mixed environmental friendly behaviour of green consumers.	60.90	III
4.	Preference of short-term environmental solutions instead of long-term by companies.	45.50	IV
5.	Absence of specialized Management/ Technical experts on green issues.	37.00	V
6.	Based on ethical binding of companies and consumers.	25.77	VI
7.	Less attractive to mainstream population.		VII

Source: Computed data

TABLE 5: OPPORTUNITIES OF GREEN MARKETING

S.No	Variables	Mean Score	Ranks
1.	A money-spinning sector	72.13	I
2.	Chances for promoting Enviropreneurship	65.10	II
3.	Chances for innovation in production and distribution	61.30	III
4.	Chances for becoming socially and relevant and sustainable business model	49.10	IV
5.	Chances of receiving support mass media	40.30	V
6.	Chances for collaboration and co-operation between companies at international level	35.97	VI
7.	Chances for becoming a market leader	23.00	VII

Source: Computed data

TABLE 6: THREATS OF GREEN MARKETING

S.No	Variables	Mean Score	Ranks
1.	No Green standards and certification	75.73	I
2.	'Green Washing' and 'Green Myopia'	69.07	II
3.	Heavy capital investments in Green Technology	62.08	III
4.	Possibility of backlash from consumers and Government	52.00	IV
5.	Shift from 'Ecological Marketing' to 'Sustainability Marketing'	46.53	V
6.	High environmental claims by MNCs	42.60	VI
7.	Segmentation of Green consumers	31.87	VII
8.	Non-readiness of consumers to pay premium for green products	23.40	VIII

Source: Computed data

FINDINGS

1. It is found from the profile of respondents that in respect of age, gender, education qualification, conferences, meetings etc., attended ; and period of experience, a majority of them belong to the category of – 'Upto 45', 'Male', 'Research Degree', 'Below 25' and 'Marketing Philosophy and Marketing Division' respectively.
2. It is inferred from the Garrett's Ranking analysis that under the component of 'Strengths', the variables such as 'Support of people, NGO's, Governmental, International bodies like UNESCO', 'Recognized as effective marketing strategy', and 'Increasing Green consumer base' with mean scores of 67.30, 62.17 and 60.73 were ranked I, II and III respectively.

Under the component of 'Weaknesses', the variables such as 'Green Guides, 2012 only administrative and optional', 'Effects of green marketing mostly indirect and not measureable', and 'Mixed environmental friendly behaviour of green consumers' with mean scores of 66.83, 62.00 and 60.90 were ranked I, II and III respectively.

Under the component of 'Opportunities', the variables such as 'A money spinning sector', 'Chances for promoting Enviropreneurship' and 'Chances for innovation in production and distribution' with mean scores of 72.13, 65.10 and 61.30 were ranked I, II and III respectively.

Under the component of 'Threats', the variables such as 'No Green standards and certification', 'Green Washing and Green Myopia' and 'Heavy capital investments in Green Technology' with mean scores of 75.73, 69.07 and 62.08, were ranked I, II and III respectively.

The other remaining variables ranked IV, V, VI, VII and VIII under the components of the analysis though looked not so significant, but, however, may be considered for decision making purposes.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Though the present study found the strengths and opportunities galore in the green marketing field, the identified weakness and threats signaled a warning to the environmentalists and green companies. For exploiting the identified strengths and opportunities to the advantage of green companies, the identified threats and weaknesses have to be addressed in the order of priority found in the analysis. In this regard, it is suggested that on lines of GATT, a policy making body at International level has to be established with the objective of framing and implementing guidelines to be followed by green companies globally. By notifying Green Standards and Certification for every product category from production to distribution, and adding provisions for dealing violators, an endeared concept of millions of people, would ensure a genuine and reliable environment-friendly marketing atmosphere worldwide. Governments of all countries by playing law maker roles have the responsibility to make the world a place worthy of living for our future generations. With the rapid changes in the consumer behaviour resulting from the green movement towards the sustainability of environment, the green products very soon will replace the traditional products. If this phenomenon continues to rise, a new market will emerge where opportunity would arise to innovate, emerge and promote green lifestyles. The finding of

the present research paper draws the attention of influential policy makers at national and international level over the issues identified in the analysis. As a whole the present paper highlights the issues under each component of SWOT analysis in an order of priority to be attended to by the parties concerned.

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