

Exploring Impact of Environmental Concern on Consumer Behaviour towards Eco-Friendly Products

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Abstract: Environment friendly products are gaining importance in the present scenario. Now days the consumer not only wants products of high quality but also improvement in the quality of life which cannot be achieved by hampering or polluting the environment. Concerns related to the environment are evident in the increasingly ecologically conscious marketplace. Various investigations of demographic, psychological and behavioral profiles of consumers reveal the willingness of consumers to pay more for environment friendly products. Today's ecological problems are so severe, that it becomes important for corporations to act responsibly toward the environment and behave in an ecologically favorable fashion. Consumers are also placing high importance to environment friendly products. The paper tries to investigate the effect of marketing and branding techniques which can help establish green brands and introduce greener patterns of consumption into contemporary lifestyles in the current context where environmentally friendly products are increasingly available. The paper also tries to investigate the effect of marketing and branding techniques incorporated by the organizations to establish green brands and introduce greener patterns of consumption into contemporary lifestyles in the current context where usage pattern of environment friendly products are increasing rapidly. The paper also tries to evaluate consumers' environmental concern and their purchasing behavior.

Keywords: Eco Friendly Products, Environmental concern, Consumer Behaviour & Purchasing Behaviour.

Introduction

Consumer Behaviour is a very vital force when it comes to knowing what actually drives consumer while making purchasing decisions. Consumer behaviour is basically study of individual or study groups, regarding how they behave in a societal setup while going for a purchasing decision. Consumer behaviour in true sense means, It is the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations select, buy, use and dispose of goods, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants. Consumer behaviour is very complex, it is basically answering questions like what, when, why, where and how consumer makes a purchasing decision (Kotler, 2000).). Many earlier studies show that consumer goes for purchasing products having economies of scale in mind, some research reveal that consumer tend to go for purchase having more of satisfaction involved with the purchase, while some researches point out that consumers purchase decision is more or less influenced by his family, friends and peer group. Recent trend shows there is a drastic rise in awareness regarding the consumption pattern, consumers are lot more aware towards environment and tend to show an environmental friendly behaviour (Dembkowski & Hammer-Lloyd, 1994; Chan, 1996; 2000; Barr & Gilg, 2006). The concern towards the environment is growing at a very rapid pace, consumer of today is much more agile towards the threat to the environment which in turn is affecting the healthy lifestyle of living (Hines et al., 1987). Today environment awareness has increased to such an extent that it has brought the whole world on the same platform which has strongly influenced the consumer behaviour towards eco-

friendly products and their consumption pattern. Consumer having eco friendly behaviour is more concerned about purchasing products or availing services which do not at all harm the environment and also try to act in a way which has a least negative effect on harming the environment. Environmental concern can be defined as the behaviour undertaken with an intention to benefit or minimise the negative impact on environment within the framework of consumption phenomenon. Green or environment friendly behaviour among the consumers has forced the companies to go green or environmental friendly. Exhibition of environmental care by the marketing companies helps in improving the product sales, product image, and also assist companies to improve all around environmental performance (Simula, Lehtimaki and Salo 2009). For the last few decades concept of environmentalism and environmental concern have been on the rise (Palmer and Neal,1994). Customers have become more environmentally conscious and many customers put forth a significant effort to buy eco-friendly products and services from eco- friendly firms

LITERATURE REVIEW

The increase of the environmental concern has had a thoughtful effect on consumer behaviour, with the green product market expanding at a remarkable rate. There are many environmental issues like global warming, climate change, environmental degradation due to pollution and this has led to loss of biodiversity that has created an imbalance in ecological system. As a result environmental concern has been an important topic of concern in both theory and practice. The environment concern is evidently predicted from consumers' purchasing patterns, with consumers increasingly preferring to buy 'environmentally friendly products'. Consumer's ecological consciousness generally means having environmental concern towards products and being sensitive towards the environment. Our lifestyle is constantly changing day by day and this has led consumers to change their consumption pattern from buying general products to purchasing eco friendly products. The increase in environmental consciousness has had a thoughtful effect on the consumer behaviour with the green product market expanding at a remarkable rate. It can also be seen that in some cases knowledge and awareness was found to be significantly related to how consumers gather, organise and evaluate products, which being a significant predictor of environmental friendly behaviour because knowledge influences all processes of the decision making, the wrong information can cause consumers to make a less perfect choice (Weilig, 1983). Environmental concern has also led to a positive shift in the mindset of the consumers for recycled products as against the traditional mindset that most green and recyclable products are inferior to general or non- recycled products, arguing the consumers perception that performance of most recycled products to not be on par with that of non-recycled products, and as consumers are either uncertain or would not buy if non- polluting products were of poor quality. It is essential to understand that there is a lot of difference between an eco-friendly consumer behaviour and general consumer behaviour, the level of commitment of an individual possessing eco friendly is much higher (Stern; 2000). Today environment awareness has increased to such an extent that it has brought the whole world on the same platform which has strongly influenced the consumer behaviour towards eco-friendly products and their consumption pattern. Consumers are today committed to bring sustainable consumption in practice. Sustainable consumption basically means to develop a system in which consumer is utilizing his/her needs but without disturbing the natural system and without harming the environment (Briwistle & Moore, 2007). Consumer surveys have reported that there is an increasing trend for willingness to spend extra money for a socially desirable concept like environmentalism but purchasing data suggest that "green" matters are

very little when compared to price, quality and convenience; therefore business have become sceptical about consumers responses to such surveys (Kaiser et. al., 2007). Cawley, (2004) found that green consumer behaviour could be influenced by the consumer knowledge and awareness towards the protection of environment. The increase in environmental concern has a greater effect on consumer behaviour, with the green product market expanding at a remarkable rate. Consumer having eco friendly behaviour is more concerned about purchasing products or availing services which do not at all harm the environment and also try to act in a way which has a least negative effect on harming the environment. Consumer is the main driving force of the society which in turn suggests that due to this consumer behaviour becomes a vital force regarding the impact of green purchases on society. It is purely an individual's choice that which kind of environment he/she wants to live in, weather he/she wants to live in a clean and pollution free environment of an environment which is not conducive for living, going about the present scenario and the awareness which is among consumer mostly every individual would prefer a cleaner and greener environment (Jackson; 2005). Ecological concern has been described as a vital force for creating a sustainable environment for living by use of the Green products. Study by Ellen (1994) found that environmental knowledge plays an important role in the performance of consumer behaviour towards eco friendly products, he also suggested that educating the consumer on environmental issues will be important in encouraging green consumption pattern. Meffert and Krichgeorge (1993) suggested that environmentally concern might occur in a number of ways mainly due to knowledge and awareness regarding environment in general and eco-friendly products in particular. The role of consumer awareness which affects consumer behaviour has been a major change in recent past towards building a society more favourable towards green products. In today's scenario every individual is concerned about the clean and green aspect of the environment, due to which the organisations are also going for technology which favours green environment. General consumer behaviour is mostly considering personal benefits and costs while green consumer not only looks for personal benefits or gains, but rather possess a future oriented approach which include cleaner environment which is pollution free and conducive for living that often benefits society as a whole (McCarthy and Shrum, 2001). Consumers are now more willing to contribute their bit in making a sustainable environment for living by going for eco friendly products (Kalafatis et al., 1999).

METHODOLOGY

The current study is done through distributing a series of questionnaire distributed among consumers of Jammu division. The study comprised of circulating 400 questionnaires of which 370 were found valid, making the success rate to 92%. The questionnaire distributed comprised of structured questionnaire comprising of both open ended and closed ended questionnaire. The questionnaire developed was studied on likert scale. The technique used while collecting questionnaire was simple random sampling.

Data Analysis and Results

The data collected supports that environmental concern possesses a positive relation while predicting consumer behaviour related towards green consumption. Environmental concern is directly proportional while predicting eco friendly consumption. The study was administered to cronbach alpha test of reliability and validity, the reliability used for the scales came out to be 0.685 for environmental concern, favouring environmental concern having positive relation while predicting eco friendly consumption. Environmental concerns were further

administered towards studying correlation among eco friendly consumption. The correlation matrix formulated shows that environmental concern possesses 75.6% while predicting eco friendly consumption.

Correlation matrix:

| Variable | Eco friendly consumption |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Environmental Concern | .756 |

The study was further administered to calculate R², which came out to be .567 predicting 56.7% of eco friendly consumption is due to environmental concern.

Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .643 | .567 | .514 | 1.203 |

Coefficients

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.104 | .567 | | 4.115 | .000 |
| | Environmental concern(EC) | .402 | .052 | .412 | .697 | .000 |

Based on the analysis following regression has been formulated to see the effect environmental concern on eco friendly consumer behaviour.

$$\text{Eco friendly Consumer behaviour} = 2.104 + .402 (\text{EC})$$

Implications and Conclusions

The findings suggests that concern towards environment depicts that there possess a positive relationship while depicting consumer behaviour. The consumer behaviour of individuals regarding eco friendly products is dependent mainly on the consumer knowledge and awareness regarding concern towards environment. Awareness of consumer regarding environmental concern has led to play a vital role while understanding consumer behaviour regarding eco friendly products. Organisation heavily relies on demand among the consumers and consumer is concerned about environment, so both consumer and business organisations are concerned about natural environment. The organisations are not only concerned about their products affect on the environment but are also concerned about the activities which starting from procurement of raw material to disposing off their product by consumer follow environmental norms and do not pollute the environment and all this is only due to the increasing consumer awareness regarding green products and consumers strong intention to buy eco friendly products. Organisations are now finding ways to produce eco friendly products which are less costly and have a value over a longer period of time. Individuals having environment concern strongly feel that it is not the sole duty of government or organisations to protect environment but it is the duty of every individual to do his/her duty to protect environment. These individuals are more open minded and ready to accept changes for the benefit of society as a whole and make the world a cleaner and greener place to live

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