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Sustainable green marketing

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Abstract

In current scenario Green Marketing has become a necessity if we want our natural environment clean, hygienic and safe. It is the biggest challenge now. This paper attempts to examine the concept of green marketing, its need and importance, problems and the suggestions for popularizing and practicing green marketing in our country. The paper also examines the challenges and opportunities businesses have with regard to green marketing.

Keywords: Sustainable, green, marketing, environment, businesses

Introduction

Environmental issues affect all human activities. It is high time that society should be aware of concerns with regard to the natural environment. Business also needs to be serious for these new concerns like environmental management and waste minimization and have to integrate environmental issues into its various organizational activities say manufacturing and marketing. Environmental pollution has become a serious problem with business and industries as they have been time and again charged with polluting environment by throwing wastes in the open or in rivers besides producing products which are not environment friendly. Green Marketing is the answer and has emerged as thrust area for all including the academicians. This study is undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To know the concept of Green Marketing.
2. To know why Green Marketing has become so important even mandatory to be implemented in our country.
3. To know about ways and methods including law and rules framed by government regarding Green Marketing
4. To study the problems with Green Marketing.
5. To offer suggestions for popularizing and practicing Green Marketing.

1. Concept of Green marketing

Green Marketing also known as Sustainable Marketing or Environmental Marketing came in to prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. According to American Marketing Association, "Green Marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. Green Marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment" According to Pride and Ferrel, Green Marketing refers to an organization's efforts at designing, promoting, pricing and distributing products that will not harm the environment.

Green Marketing thus involves the designing, producing, packaging and marketing of products not harmful to the consumers and the environment even in the long run. It also covers designing of production system which eliminates wastes and pollution. It is holistic marketing in the sense that it requires organizations to go for environment friendly products at all levels, say from the suppliers to the end users. Green Marketing incorporates a broad range of activities including awareness towards global warming, non-biodegradable solid waste and harmful impact of pollutants. It covers product, production process, packaging, marketing, advertising modification.

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It is directly related to products and services which have to be made environment friendly by incorporating some features and ingredients therein. Some characteristics of green products are:

1. Products those are originally grown.
2. Products those are recycled, reusable and biodegradable.
3. Products with natural ingredients, non-toxic chemical.
4. Products that do not harm or pollute the environment.
5. Products that have eco-friendly packaging i.e. which can be repair, remanufacture, reuse, recycle and reduce disposable wastes.

2. Reasons why green marketing has become so important even mandatory

In face of giant size industrial enterprises involving huge volume of raw material consumption, finished products and wastes, Green Marketing has become very important. It has been made even mandatory in a number of products and services in some countries. The reason is the impact the same have on living style and living standard of general population. It results in following benefits:

- a. Save money in long term for example, initial cost of solar energy installation is usually paid back within 3-5 years through savings in power bills and thereafter, savings in energy bills continue.
- b. Better image of company and its products in the minds of consumers as most of the consumers these days prefer products which are environment friendly.
- c. Increase in profit through increase in sale and reduction in cost.
- d. Competitive advantage over those marketing non-environmentally friendly products.
- e. Meeting social responsibilities of business.
- f. Enable business and public to comply with the norms relating to pollution control including environment marketing.

3. Ways and methods including law and rules framed by government for green marketing

The public is becoming aware of the effects of polluted environment and continuously raising their voice compelling the government to come out with appropriate action plan including the norms and rules for the protection of environment. Governments are now taking various steps say putting moral pressure, framing and enforcing norms, rules and standards in respect of industries which may harm environment. Some important recent developments in this respect are as under:

- a. Almost all states have pollution control authorities with power to check and control pollution harming industries/activities.
- b. Vehicles have to conform to pollution control norms prescribed by government say Bharat III/Euro III.
- c. Some governments like Delhi, HP etc. now have banned the use of plastic bags and others are discouraging use of such items.
- d. Companies developed and launched environment friendly products. Examples are computer peripherals, mobile handsets, electric cars, electric scooters, cement, adhesives, tube lights, ACs and Fridges. Increased use of wind turbines and solar power for street lighting even for ATM. Suzlon, the world-famous manufacturer of wind turbines is in India.

- e. To conserve paper and to minimize waste paper handling, companies have started using e mailing for various communications say annual reports, notices, etc. to shareholders. Use of e banking and ATM is also encouraged.
- f. Some companies like McDonalds, Reliance Fresh, which buy bulk quantity and have good influence over suppliers insist that the suppliers too practice green marketing norms.
- g. Provision of subsidies and incentives to industries which implement eco-friendly norms and schemes.
- h. Subsidies to consumers using such products say electric motor car and bike, installing solar power equipment.
- i. Making use of media roles, conveying information through advertising, direct mailing, brand labels in stores displays and pamphlets.
- j. Government has set energy efficiency norms and standards for some items. Items like ACs, fridges, tube lights, etc. now have stars showing efficiency in energy consumption. Vehicles also have fuel efficiency norms and guidelines.
- k. Adopting different green marketing strategies.
- l. Disclosures may be voluntary or otherwise regarding eco-friendly nature of products.

4. Problems with green marketing

The major problem with green marketing is the cost sometimes very high involved in implementation of green marketing norms. Business enterprises normally do cost-benefit analysis and finding cost to be very high in comparison to benefits, ignore environmental norms. They even do not look to the fact that the shift to green marketing may be expensive at the start but it will be advantageous in the long run. This excessive cost belief in the minds of producers has become a major barrier in the way of implementing eco-friendly norms in some enterprises. Some other problems are:

- a. Worldwide evidence indicates people's concern about the environment. They are now opting for eco-friendly and socially responsible products and services but still traditional attributes such as convenience, availability, price influence their purchasing decisions.
- b. Lack of education and awareness regarding environmental threats including the importance and benefits of environment among general public is another problem. This result in unpredictable consumer behavior as a large number of consumers perceives green products as of inferior quality, inferior performance and of not so good appearance. They dislike repaired, re-processed and recycled products.
- c. Lack of standardization norms and authenticity of claims increases the consumer's doubts.
- d. Lack of long-term perspective among the corporate, entrepreneurs and investors regarding the necessity and benefits from the new green movement.
- e. Deceptive claims in respect of some ecofriendly products or some organization.

5. Suggestions

Green marketing should not be considered as just one more approach to marketing but has to be pursued with much greater vigor as it has environmental and social dimension as well. Marketers have the responsibility to make consumers understand the need for and the benefits of green products as

compared to non-green products and hence are made willing to pay more to maintain a cleaner and greener environment.

- a. Adopting different green marketing strategies.
- b. Information disclosures on products need to be strictly enforced. These disclosures may be voluntary like by NGO or self-help group pressures or mandatory as required by law regarding standardized information to consumers and stakeholders.
- c. Publicity about Green Marketing generating awareness among the general public including the consumers regarding green products and green firms.
- d. Reassuring consumers that their actions will have macro impact.
- e. Need of strong and strict action against violators by the government.
- f. Making use of mass media say through advertising, direct mailing, brand labels in stores, displays and pamphlets displayed in stores and shops is a must.

Conclusion

With the threat of global warming, it is extremely important that green marketing becomes the norm rather than an exception or just a fad. So environmentally responsible organizations should attempt to minimize their waste and at the same time use waste to produce some other products. They should do adequate researches to find out alternate uses of wastes.

More and more organizations are adopting it in a big way and the future of green marketing is bright. Green Marketing will continue to grow. Customers also now prefer such products. The government should frame strict rules because it is a matter of saving the world from pollution. Our slogan should be- 'Think Green, go Green and practice green'.

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