

Green Marketing and Consumer Behaviour: Emerging Trends in Sustainable Business Practices

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Abstract

This is a review paper that dwells upon the fact that the relationship between green marketing and consumer behaviour focuses on the movement toward sustainable business practises. It integrates the available literature to learn the relationship that exists between green marketing strategies and consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and brand loyalty. The review indicates that increased environmental consciousness and preferences in ethical consumption patterns have compelled businesses to embrace environmentally friendly marketing, sustainable packaging, and open communication. Among the main tendencies, one will single out the emergence of digital green marketing, the incorporation of ESG principles, and the implementation of the models of the circular economy. Nevertheless, the literature also demonstrates that there are still certain issues including greenwashing, high cost of products, and the attitude-behaviour gap in the consumers. The article concludes that new studies need to revolve around cross-cultural investigation, digital revolution in green marketing, and the effects of long-term behaviour to enhance the relationship between sustainability and consumer decision-making.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Sustainability, Eco-Branding, Sustainable Business Practises, Circular Economy.

Introduction

Due to the rising environmental crisis and the heightened consumer consciousness, the world is moving into a sustainable area. Companies are currently incorporating environmental concerns in their mainstream strategies to satisfy the requirements of the green consumers. Green marketing, also referred to as sustainable or eco-marketing, aims at advertising products and practises, which have little effects on the environment and meet the needs of consumers in a responsible manner. It is a strategic correlation between profitability and environmental stewardship so that sustainability occurs as an advantage in competition, not a duty.

In this change, consumer behaviour becomes a critical factor. The contemporary consumer is more knowledgeable and value-driven and prefers to use products which represent some ethical care and openness. Nevertheless, our real buying behaviours in spite of improved awareness are often inconsistent with sustainable intentions a gap that still remains among the major concerns of both marketers and researchers.

This literature review seeks to overlay the available literature on green marketing and consumer behaviour with respect to exploring the impact of sustainability-based marketing practises on consumer decision making and brand image. It also mentions the new trends in sustainable business practises like eco-labelling, green marketing online, and the use of the circular

economy. This paper offers perspectives on future trends in academia and industry through an examination of the existing literature and research gaps; more importantly, it points out the necessity to have genuine, meaningful, and quantifiable sustainability practises in marketing.

Review of Literature

The studies on the green marketing and consumer behaviour have changed significantly over the last 20 years as the concept of sustainability has increasingly become part of the business practises and households. Initial research in the 1990s essentially saw green marketing as a reactive strategy, or one in which the company responded to environmental regulation and consumer pressure by making subtle changes to products or packaging. Nevertheless, newer literature does treat green marketing as a proactive and strategic role of focusing on long term ecological balance, ethical responsibility as well as value creation. Peattie and Charter (2003) also described green marketing as a comprehensive management process that fulfils the need of the customers and society in a profitable and sustainable manner. This definition altered the emphasis to the short term promotional campaigns to the business models that are based on sustainability.

The study of consumer behaviour in this respect shows that consumer awareness with regard to the environmental issues, is a major factor influencing the buying intentions, although this awareness is not always translated into the actual buying behaviour what is defined as the attitude-behaviour gap. Joshi and Rahman (2015) and Nguyen et al. (2020) state that consumers base their green purchase decisions on factors related to trust in eco-labels, perceived consumer effectiveness, and price sensitivity. A significant portion of consumers are interested in the environmental issue but are often distrustful of whether the companies are acting greener than they appear to be when they encounter a situation of greenwashing, where through exaggeration or other false advertising, the company claims to be environmentally friendly. This doubts the effect of the sustainability messages and the necessity of more openness and validation in terms of certifications and valid communication.

Recent studies have found out that there is a close relation between green marketing and brand loyalty. Patagonia, Unilever, and Tesla companies are the companies that have established images of sustainability as they incorporate the values of environmental friendliness into their operations, communications, and brand identities. The development of digital marketing platforms has further revolutionised what green marketing is since it allows marketers to interact directly with their consumers through storytelling, influencer promotions, and social media campaigns to create environmental awareness. Researchers have observed that digital platforms enhance the visibility and authority of green messages particularly among the younger generations who attach importance to authenticity and social concern.

Some of the new trends in business sustainability are the incorporation of the ideas of a circular economy that involves reusing, recycling, and redesigning products to reduce waste. According to the research by Kirchherr et al. (2018), the adoption of the circular economy does not only lessen the reliance on resources but also promotes the corporate competitiveness and brand differentiation. Likewise, green marketing new innovations such as sustainable packaging and sustainable supply chains have become key elements of green marketing today. Businesses are

making more investments in biodegradable materials, carbon-neutral delivery, and ethical procuring as a means of underpinning their green commitments.

The good news notwithstanding, there are still a number of challenges. The reason why many people do not adopt green marketing practises is owing to high production costs, scarcity of environmentally friendly materials and absence of standard environmental laws. Also, as noted in numerous studies, sustainable consumption is still more common in the developed economies than in the developing ones, where cost and availability still prevail as primary consumer values. Researchers indicate that this gap can only be narrowed by both the corporate programmes and government policies and education programmes that promote responsible consumption.

In general, the literature highlights that even though green marketing has grown as a niche concept to a mainstream business strategy, its effectiveness is based on authenticity, innovation, and consumer trust. The dynamic nature of the current body of research observes the potentials and limitations of ensuring that marketing practises are in line with the sustainable development objectives pointing to the need to constantly review and modify as the marketplace grows more environmentally aware.

Discussion

The review of the existing literature revealed that the research topics of green marketing and consumer behaviour are interconnected and predetermined by a complex of diverse psychological, social, and economic factors. This has been concluded to be due to the fact that consumer worry concerning the issues related to the environment has increased massively yet the behavioural shift is not necessarily linear. Many consumers are also very concerned about the environment but they fail to translate the same into sustainable purchasing behaviours. This gap that is also referred to as the attitude-behaviour gap has been a bugging question to both the marketers and policymakers. It states that creating awareness is insufficient but businesses must portray trust, affordability, accessibility, and effective communication to achieve a behavioural change.

The argument also brings out the fact that transparency of corporations is a crucial aspect that determines the credibility of green marketing strategies. Consumers in the modern world require a verifiable evidence of environmental commitment by a brand. Firms that incorporate quantifiable sustainability aspects, e.g. carbon footprint decreases, eco-certifications, ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) reports, have better chances of earning consumer trust and loyalty. On the other hand, false marketing or the greenwashing can lead to serious reputational losses. Research results are always consistent that successful green marketing performance is characterised by authenticity and long term commitment as opposed to short term campaigns.

The next notable point is the ultimate role of digital technology and social media in conditioning the consumers to be green. Sustainability communication has been democratised via the digital platforms since consumers can now engage directly with the brands, exchange opinions, and hold companies accountable. Storytelling-based campaigns and influencer marketing have been especially successful in accessing younger audiences that are

environmentally concerned. Nevertheless, this technological development only raises the possibility of misinformation, which is why evidence-based communication and data transparency should be emphasised in green marketing.

Comparisons with regard to industry reveal that the fashion industry, automobiles, and consumer product industry are leading the pack in terms of introducing sustainable marketing. Sustainability can also be embedded as a part of the brand identity, which is the case of such brands as Patagonia, The Body Shop, or Tesla, forming emotional connexions with consumers. One example of this trend is the trend towards slow fashion, recycling, and ethical sourcing that has been on the rise in the fashion industry. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) on the other hand frequently experience obstacles of resources and know-how on how to conduct green marketing, an aspect that government should intervene and through joint efforts.

The discussion also acknowledges the variation in the green marketing adoption around the world. Developed countries have well developed structures of sustainability reporting and consumer education, whereas developing countries are still struggling with the affordability and insufficient environmental awareness. In other nations such as India, e.g. green marketing is expanding fast but is still focused on urban and educated buyers. The awareness creation to the rural and semi-urban markets via education and incentives might be critical in filling this gap.

On the whole, the review of the literature shows that the effectiveness of green marketing is preconditioned by the comprehensive approach that will encompass corporate integrity, consumer empowerment, and support of policies. Corporations need to go beyond the token gestures of ensuring sustainability is ingrained at every organisational tier. The governments, on their part, ought to establish conducive policies that can promote sustainable production and marketing. Consumers, being the ultimate decision-makers, should also develop into active participants of transitions to sustainability other than inactive observers.

This discussion has reaffirmed that green marketing is not only a business trend but a permanent change in the relationship of business between companies and consumers and the environment. The sustainable business lies in the future of the cooperation between the stakeholders to the extent that profitability and the well-being of the planet will be balanced in order to make sustainability a matter of custom, but not a marketing decision.

Implications

The implications of the given review to business, consumers, and policymakers are significant since the integration of efforts of the mentioned stakeholders can increase the effectiveness of green marketing and speed up the shift to sustainable business operations.

To businesses, as highlighted in the review, green marketing needs to be more than just a symbolic gesture that should be incorporated in the corporate strategy. The companies ought to incorporate sustainability in the design of their products, operations and branding and not use it as a promotion gimmick. The modern markets are characterised by authenticity and transparency, and consumers are willing to find brands that portray actual environmental responsibility. Companies which report quantifiable sustainability reports like lower carbon

footprint, recyclable packs, or responsible sourcing will have a higher chance of gaining long-term consumer confidence and loyalty. Besides, to remain competitive, organisations should pay attention to innovation through investment in renewable technologies, sustainable materials and circular economy models. Incorporating electronic instruments in sustainability reporting and consumer outreach can be used to enhance credibility and presence in the international market as well.

To consumers, the implications are based on the issue of awareness, education as well as empowerment. Attitudes can be changed by green marketing, yet consumers have the responsibility of making informed decisions which are in line with the environmental values. More education on eco-labels, certifications and sustainability statements can teach people to differentiate between authentic and fake advertisements. With the increasing influence of social media and digital platforms in creating a perception, more than ever before, consumers can impact the practises of corporations through advocacy and conscious consumption. Nevertheless, the cost factor is also an essential variable; thus, green products need to be marketed at affordable rates to allow a large number of users instead of focusing on the sustainability of high-end markets.

These implications are also crucial to the policymakers. The governments are crucial in establishing regulatory and institutional framework to facilitate sustainable marketing and consumer protection. There should be more powerful policies in order to avoid greenwashing and to normalise the practises of eco-labelling and sustainability reporting. Business can be motivated to use environmentally friendly operations through fiscal incentives like tax benefits and subsidies on green innovations. Also, sustainability education taught in schools and on popular campaigns can develop the culture of responsible consumption at an early age. The policymakers should also be able to be inclusive of sustainable development by dealing with the socio-economic factors that make low-income consumers inaccessible to green products and services.

On the whole, the implications of this review are to a shared responsibility in which an innovative and transparent business is in the vanguard, informed and ethical consumer choice is in response, and a regulatory, educational policy enables the shift. The collaboration between these three groups will be what will make the global initiatives on global sustainability successful. Green marketing allows being a formidable driver of behaviour change and a long-term ecological equilibrium as it allows coordinating marketing policies with social and environmental interests so that economic development does not conflict with environmental conservation.

Future Research Directions

The dynamic nature of the green marketing and consumer behaviour field provides enormous prospects to the academic research. Despite the fact that a significant research work has been done on the motivations of green consumption and sustainable marketing approaches, there are several areas which have not been investigated carefully and need further study. The research activities to be carried out in the future must be geared towards comprehending the nature of consumer reactions to green marketing in various geographical areas based on cultural,

demographic, and socioeconomic influences. The comparative study of the sustainability perceptions across cultures may identify the differences and contribute to the design of more inclusive and situational marketing strategies by the global businesses.

The other valuable direction is the role of digital transformation in the creation of green consumer behaviour. As artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and social media marketing rise, future studies ought to examine how the technologies affect the suitability of sustainability communication, trust development, and purchase decisions. Research might also focus on the moral aspects of the digital green marketing, especially regarding data transparency and manipulation of consumers by use of persuasive algorithms.

There is also need to conduct longitudinal studies to analyse the long-term behavioural effects of green marketing initiatives. The majority of current studies are based on cross sectional surveys that are taken on consumer attitudes at one point in time. Monitoring the behavioural change in the long run would give good information on whether sustainability-driven marketing results in the establishment of consistent and routine consumption of ecological products.

More studies on the ability to gauge authenticity of corporate sustainability claims are still necessary. Accountability can be increased by developing effective tools and frameworks to determine the credibility of the green advertising and sustainability reporting. Further, the overlap between corporate social responsibility (CSR), brand purpose, and consumer loyalty must also be explored and discussed in greater depth so as to decipher the combination of these aspects in affecting the market competitiveness.

Lastly, the developing economies should be given more scholarly interest, since most studies on green marketing are concerned with the developed economies. The problem of low affordability, low awareness, and infrastructural barriers that are impediments to sustainable consumption are issues that research in developing countries should address. Exploring new insights into low-cost and community-driven green marketing solutions in these areas would provide new insights on attaining inclusive and equitable sustainability.

In short, the multidisciplinary and global strategy that incorporates marketing, psychology, technology, and environmental science should be used in future research. These endeavours will assist in perfecting the theoretical and practical knowledge about the role of green marketing in creating a sustainable consumer behaviour and enhancing the need to shift to a more sustainable economy within a shorter time.

Conclusion

The review has made conclusions that green marketing has gained significant strategic value in the process of matching the business objectives to the environment and social responsibility. It is not only restricted to the traditional philosophy of marketing the green products but has gone holistic where it has integrated sustainability across all the value chain levels. The literature makes it clear that the consumer behaviour is the key to the successful implementation of green marketing programmes, and environmentally responsible consumers are the ones that are increasingly defining the trends in the market and the business strategies

of the corporations. However, attitude-behaviour gap is a major issue regardless of the fact that it has been persistent and it is a clear manifestation that awareness is not sufficient to maintain purchasing behaviour. To bridge this gap, this will require a combination of consumer education, corporate transparency and favourable policy frameworks.

Another point that the research makes is that the notion of true and authentic green marketing enhances brand trust, heart and competitiveness in the future. The companies which are found to be environmentally responsible which cannot be quantified but rather founded on false pretence have greater chances of building meaningful relationships with the consumers. The new trends in digital green marketing, circular economy models and ESG-based communication have re-invented the ways in which companies can connect with the audiences interested in sustainability. Nevertheless, the problems such as high production tax, unavailability to the consumer and greenwashing remain factors that have been posing challenges in the adoption of sustainable operations across the board in a third world country.

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