

Theoretical Framework of Green Marketing: Marketing Mix Strategies and Challenges

دراسة نظرية للتسويق الأخضر: استراتيجيات المزيج التسويقي و التحديات

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Abstract:

Recently corporate social responsibility towards environmental protection has gained great importance, and many companies are aware of environmental issues. Thus, marketers have adopted the concept of green marketing which primarily advocates sustainable development, by offering products that satisfy consumers needs or wants, with no harm to the environment. This paper attempts to introduce the concept and challenges of green marketing, its importance in achieving sustainable development and presenting green marketing mix strategies.

We concluded that green marketing faces a lot of challenges, as it is entirely a new concept which will take a lot of time and effort to be accepted. Therefore, it requires focusing on long-term benefits, and avoiding unethical practices such as greenwashing or misleading advertising, as well as taking the responsibility of making consumers understand the need for and benefits of green products to maintain a cleaner and greener environment.

Keywords: Green Marketing; Marketing Mix; Green product; Marketing Myopia; Greenwashing.

JEL Classification Codes: M14 , M31 , Q01 , Q56 , Q57.

ملخص:

اكتسبت المسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات تجاه حماية البيئة أهمية كبيرة في الآونة الأخيرة، كما تزايد وعي العديد من الشركات بالقضايا البيئية. وفي هذا السياق؛ تبنى المسوقون مفهوم التسويق الأخضر الذي يكرس معنى التنمية المستدامة، من خلال تقديم منتجات تلبي احتياجات ورغبات المستهلكين دون الإضرار بالبيئة. نسعى من خلال هذه الورقة إلى التعريف بمفهوم وتحديات التسويق الأخضر وأهميته في تحقيق التنمية المستدامة، مع عرض استراتيجيات مزيج التسويق الأخضر. وقد خلصنا إلى أن التسويق الأخضر يواجه الكثير من التحديات، باعتباره مفهوما حديثا، وبالتالي يتطلب الكثير من الوقت والجهد لقبوله. وعليه؛ يتوجب على الشركات التركيز على المزايا طويلة الأجل وتجنب الممارسات غير الأخلاقية مثل الغسيل الأخضر أو الإعلانات المضللة، فضلا عن ضرورة الاهتمام بتوعية المستهلكين بأهمية فوائد المنتجات الخضراء للحفاظ على بيئة أنظف وأكثر اخضرارًا

كلمات مفتاحية: تسويق أخضر؛ مزيج تسويقي؛ منتج أخضر؛ قصر نظر تسويقي؛ غسيل أخضر.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid economic development and technological progress have caused many environmental problems such as climate change, pollution and haze, which are considered to be among the most serious challenges for the world at the present time. Thus, companies are becoming more environmentally conscious and have integrated environmental issues into their marketing strategies accordingly with the emergence of the concept of Green Marketing where new “green” products were developed to satisfy the customers wants and needs with a minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment.

On this basis, we formulate the main question: What are the strategies of the green marketing mix to overcome environmental constraints and offer products that will not harm the environment?

To answer the previous question, the remainder of this paper is divided into three sections as follows:

- The first section introduces the concept of green marketing, its evolution and importance;
- The second section presents the challenges of green marketing,
- And the third section describes the marketing mix of green marketing.

2. Green Marketing: Importance and Evolution of the Concept:

Green marketing is considered as a tool towards sustainable development due to the increasing deterioration of human life. Actually; green marketing promotes the preservation of the natural environment which can benefit the firms and the consumers as well.

2.1 Definition and importance of Green Marketing:

Green, environmental and ecological marketing are part of the new marketing approaches which do not just refocus, adjust or enhance existing marketing thinking and practice, but seek to challenge those approaches and provide a substantially different perspective. In more detail green, environmental and eco-marketing belong to the group of approaches which seek to address the lack of fit between marketing as it is currently practiced and the ecological and social realities of the wider marketing environment (Pandi, 2015, p. 43)

Green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe (Kumara, 2017, p. 70). Polonsky (1994) defines green marketing as 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 (Patel, 2016, p. 140).

Green marketing involves developing and promoting products and services that satisfy customers' wants and needs for quality, performance, affordable pricing and convenience all without a detrimental impact on the environment (Pandi, 2015, p. 43). For most people, Green Marketing is not only about using Marketing Mix with a smaller impact on the environment. Green marketing is also about following corporate social responsibility practices (Kumara, 2017, p. 71). These days concepts of green marketing are taking shape as one of the key business strategies of the companies for gaining the competitive advantage, ensuring sustainable consumption of their products in the markets and enjoying sustainable development in future. Marketers must realize now that green marketing is not purely altruistic, it can be a profitable endeavor for sustainable development (Choudhary & Gokarn, 2013, p. 31).

2.2 Evolution of Green Marketing:

The term Green Marketing came into prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The green marketing has evolved over this period. The evolution of green marketing had three phases (Surya & Banu, 2014, p. 1).

- The first phase was termed as "Ecological" green marketing, and during this period all marketing activities were concerned to help environment problems and provide remedies for environmental problems. The main focus of the first phase was on those industries and product that have direct impact on the environment; (Oil, chemical industry and mining etc) (Kumara, 2017, p. 71).
- The second phase was "Environmental" green marketing and the focus shifted on clean technology that involved designing of innovative new products, which take care of pollution and waste issues. Mainly products generally used in homes (Carpets, papers and cleaning goods etc.) (Kumara, 2017, p. 71).
- The third phase was "Sustainable" green marketing. It came into prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000. This was the result of the term sustainable development which is based on the concept of development (socio-economic development in line with ecological constraints), the concept of needs (redistribution of resources to ensure the quality of life for all) and the concept of future generations

(the possibility of long-term usage of resources to ensure the necessary quality of life for future generations) (Klarin, 2018, p. 68), and has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report (Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, 1987); as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (www.iisd.org).

Today, companies are accepting more responsibility for protecting the environment. They are shifting from protest to prevention and from regulation to responsibility. More and more companies are adopting policies of environmental sustainability. Some companies have responded to consumer environmental concerns by doing only what is required to avert new regulations or to keep environmentalists quiet. Enlightened companies are taking action not because someone is forcing them, or to reap short-run profits but because it is the right thing to do for both the company and for the planet’s environmental future (Pandi, 2015, p. 49). The following figure shows a grid that companies can use to gauge their progress toward environmental sustainability.

Table 1. Greening activities toward environmental sustainability

Particulars	Today: Greening	Tomorrow: Beyond Greening
Internal	Pollution prevention Eliminating or reducing waste before it is created	New clean technology Developing new sets of environmental skills and capabilities
External	Product stewardship Minimizing environmental impact throughout the entire product life cycle	Sustainability vision Creating a strategic framework for future sustainability

Source : Pandi, 2015, p. 50.

It includes both internal and external “greening” activities that will pay off for the firm and environment in the short-run and “beyond greening” activities that will pay off in the longer term. At the most basic level, a company can practice

pollution prevention. This involves more than pollution control – cleaning up waste after it has been created. Pollution prevention means eliminating or minimizing waste before it is created. Companies emphasizing prevention have responded with internal “green marketing” programs – designing and developing ecologically safer products, recyclable and biodegradable packaging, better pollution controls, and more energy-efficient operations (Pandi, 2015, p. 50).

3. Challenges of Green Marketing

Green Marketing strategies provide more benefits to consumers and the society as a whole, as well as it helps to create green environment by adopting eco-friendly marketing practices. However; getting more benefits from green marketing faces a lot of challenges.

3.1 New Concept:

Green marketing is entirely a new concept. The consumer needs is to be educated and made aware of environmental threats. This new concept needs to reach the masses and that will take a lot of time and effort (Singh & Kumar, 2017, p. 21). Furthermore, the lack of proper knowledge of consumers about environmental issues, some time causes problem for companies to represent their products in market place as high percentage of customers still feel that environmental products do not work as well as conventional one; some time though the consumers are well aware about a particular issue, they are not willing to pay a premium price for a green product (Ghoshal, 2011, p. 7).

3.2 Avoiding Green Myopia: (Singh & Kumar, 2017, p. 22)

The first rule of green marketing is focusing on consumer satisfaction and benefits; in other words, the primary reason why the consumers buy those products. The consumers may get motivated to switch brands or they even pay a premium for the greener alternative. This will lead to green myopia, where companies tend to focus on profits rather than on the benefits achieved from using the green products (Wahab, 2018, p. 76). At the same time; if the green products are priced very high. It will naturally lose its market acceptability among consumers.

3.3 Greenwashing:

Greenwashing refers to the practice of falsely promoting an organization’s environmental efforts or spending more resources to promote the organization as green than are spent to actually engage in environmentally sound practices. Thus greenwashing is the dissemination of false or deceptive information regarding an organization’s environmental strategies, goals, motivations, and actions (Becker-Olsen & Potucek, 2013, p. 1318).

Although green marketing and sustainable value systems can provide a venue for positive identity change for a brand or firm, the adoption of such a stance

without the structure to back it up is dangerous. Although intentional greenwashing may be used to alter image and brand attributes, it can have significant unintended consequences for the organization if consumers do not see the firm building sustainability into their everyday practices. Alternatively, when a firm greenwashes and presents an image that might be overly optimistic with regard to its sustainability practices, the firm might be motivated to conform to that image (Becker-Olsen & Potucek, 2013, p. 1321). Ford Motor Company was accused of greenwashing in 2004, when it advertised its Escape Hybrid SUV as an example of Ford commitment to the environment. For the fifth consecutive year, Ford vehicles had the worst overall fuel economy of all major automakers. In fact, Ford fleetwide fuel economy was worse than it was in 1984, and hybrids accounted less than 1% of Ford's annual sales (Mooney, Knox, & Schacht, 2009, p. 562). The public tends to be skeptical of green claims and companies can seriously damage their brands and their sales if a green claim is discovered to be false or contradicted by a company's other products or practices (Wahab, 2018, p. 76).

3.4 Cost Factor:

Green products require renewable and recyclable material, which is costly. Furthermore, Green marketing involves marketing of green products/services, green technology, green power/energy for which requires a huge investment in R&D programs for their development and subsequent promotional programs which ultimately may lead to increased costs (Sharma & Singh, 2015, p. 144).

3.5 A Need for standardization:

It is found that in green marketing only 5% of the marketing from Green Campaigns are entirely true and there is a lack of standardization to authenticate the claims. Currently, there is no standardization in place to certify a product as organic. But some regulatory bodies are involved by providing the specific certifications. Also a standard quality control board needs to be in place for such labeling and licensing (Singh & Kumar, 2017, p. 21).

3.6 Sustainability:

Initially, the profits are very low since renewable and recyclable products and green technologies are more expensive. Green marketing will be successful only in long run. Hence the business needs to plan for long term rather than short term strategy and prepare for the same, at the same time it should avoid falling into lure of unethical practices to make profits in short term costs (Sharma & Singh, 2015, p. 145). Marketers need to be patient to achieve the long-term benefits from green movement. It will require a lot of patience and no immediate results. Since it is a new concept and idea, it will take its time to be accepted (Kumara, 2017, p. 73).

3.7 When firms attempt to become socially responsible, they may face the risk that the environmentally responsible action of today will be found to be harmful in near

future. For example some companies manufacturing refrigerators, air-conditioning machine have replaced environmentally harmful CFCs (chlorofluorocarbon) with HFCs (hydro fluorocarbon) which is later revealed also a green-house gas. Some firms now shifted to DME (dimethyl ether), which may also harm the ozone layer. So we can see that with the limited scientific knowledge at any point in time, it may be impossible for a firm to be certain they have made the correct environmental decision (Ghoshal, 2011, p. 6).

4. Green Marketing Mix

Like conventional marketers, green marketers must address the Green marketing mix or the '4 Ps' in an innovative manner.

4.1 Product:

Actually there is no consensus on what exactly is green. There is no accepted definition of green product. However based on different definitions of green marketing, some common characteristics of products generally accepted as green, including the products are: Energy-efficient (both in use and in production); Water efficient (both in use and in production); Low emitting (low on hazardous emissions); Safe and/or healthy products; Recyclable and/or with recycled content; Durable (long-lasting); Biodegradable; Renewable and Reused products (Zabiullah, Chinna, & Reddy, 2017, pp. 832, 833). Thus, green based product strategies comprise a combination of recycling, reduction of packaging materials, dematerializing the products; using sustainable source of raw materials, making more durable products; designing products that are repairable, making products that are safe for disposal, making products and packaging's that are compostable, and making products that are safer or more pleasant to use (Patel, 2016, p. 141). Furthermore, The products have to be developed depending on the needs of the customers who prefer environment friendly products (Shil, 2012, p. 77).

The ecological objectives in planning products are to reduce resource consumption and pollution and to increase conservation of scarce resources. The marketer's role in product management includes providing product designers with market-driven trends and customer requests for green product attributes such as energy saving, organic, green chemicals, local sourcing, etc., For example, Nike is the first among the shoe companies to market itself as green. It is marketing its Air Jordan shoes as environment friendly, as it has significantly reduced the usage of harmful glue adhesives. It has designed this variety of shoes to emphasize that it has reduced wastage and used environment-friendly materials (Surya & Banu, 2014, pp. 3, 4).

The Toyota Prius is likely the most successful green product in the world today, and for many good reasons. First, it provides consumers with all they seek in a sedan and more attractive styling, fuel efficiency and a hybrid engine that makes it possible to drive for an unlimited amount of miles stopping only for fill-ups

(versus, for instance, having to stop for a 12-hour recharge if the engine were all electric). Also because of the hybrid engine, the car is beloved by car enthusiasts for its quiet ride. When the car was introduced, ads focused on superior performance evidenced in a quiet ride, while supplemental ads touted its environmental bona fides. With energy prices on the rise, the Prius pitch has shifted to superior fuel efficiency, while a crafty PR machine links the car to environmentally conscious celebrities and causes (Ottman, 2008, p. 67).

4.2 Price:

Green pricing takes into consideration the people, planet and profit in a way that takes care of the health of employees and communities and ensures efficient productivity (Shil, 2012, p. 77). Pricing is a critical and important factor of green marketing mix. Most consumers will only be prepared to pay additional value if there is a perception of extra product value. This value may be improved performance, function, design, visual appeal, or taste. Green marketing should take all these facts into consideration while charging a premium price. E.g. Wal Mart unveiled its first recyclable cloth shopping bag. IKEA, EASYDAY stores started charging consumers when they opted for plastic bags and encouraged people to shop using its "Big Blue Bag" (Surya & Banu, 2014, pp. 3, 4).

Environmental benefits are usually an added bonus but will often be the deciding factor between products of equal value and quality. Environmentally responsible products, however, are often less expensive when product life cycle costs are taken into consideration. For example fuel efficient vehicles, water-efficient printing and non-hazardous products. The price of green product has to be affordable for the customer to encourage purchase. Industrial differentiation works only when products reduce client's cost (Pandi, 2015, p. 52).

However; consumers perceived that the performance of the green products that were manufactured with recycle materials or remanufactured products have poor performance than the conventional products and they are not willing to buy green product for a higher price (Yan & Yazdanifard, 2014, p. 36), while their assumption may be true Peattie (1999) argues that these products are not unusually expensive, but the conventional products are unrealistically cheap because they exclude socio-environmental costs of production, product use and disposal. He suggests that one way to deal with the high price controversy is to ask the consumer "whether they want to continue buying inexpensive products that damage the environment?" The implication of the above is that consumers need more information on benefits of green products in order to judge their value more objectively (Patel, 2016, p. 141).

4.3 Promotion:

Promoting products and services to target markets includes paid advertising,

public relations, sales promotions, direct marketing and on-site promotions.

There are three types of green advertising: The first one addresses a relationship between a product/service and the biophysical environment. The second promotes a green lifestyle by highlighting a product or service, and finally, advertising that presents a corporate image of environmental responsibility (Garg & Sharma, 2017, p. 181). Smart green marketers will be able to reinforce environmental credibility by using sustainable marketing and communications tools and practices. For example, many companies in the financial industry are providing electronic statements by email, e-marketing is rapidly replacing more traditional marketing methods, and printed materials can be produced using recycled materials and efficient processes, such as waterless printing (Pandi, 2015, pp. 52, 53).

Promote your green credentials and achievements; publicize stories of the company's and employees' green initiatives, enter environmental awards programs to profile environmental credentials to customers and stakeholders. Most buyers are influenced by advertisement that reflects a company's commitment to environment. Companies that do green advertisement that tend to portray an image of environmental friendliness, influences their customer purchase decisions. Consumers love to associate themselves with companies that are environmental stewards. When a company communicates this through their advertisements, promotions, publicity and corporate social responsibilities, they are sure to get many loyal customers (Pandi, 2015, p. 53).

On the other hand, marketers should avoid unethical practices when promoting their green products, such as misleading advertising, or deceptive packaging. Attas (1999) argued in this context that an advertisement will be deemed misleading or deceptive only if it is reasonable to expect that persons exposed to it, or those targeted by it, would come to hold false beliefs as a result of exposure to it. The reasonable person would be misled by the advertisement meaning that the probability that a consumer would be misled by the advertisement is sufficiently high (Kaufmann, Ali Khan Panni & Orphanidou, 2012, p. 57).

Whereas packaging refers to the term used for containers and wrapping materials that protect, contain, identify, promote and facilitate the use of the product. So the deceptive packaging can be termed as the packaging which is used by the companies or marketers that will contain false identity, faulty information and which will unfairly promote the products to the consumers. Faruque (2003); Mann and Thornton (1978) indicated deceptive packaging as one sort of unscrupulous practice done by the marketers whereby the faulty product information or misinformation is provided on the label or package in order to deceive consumers. In respect of green marketing; deceptive packaging refers to the false and misleading information about the greenness of the product on its label and package. The common practices are false green/organic claim on its label or package, exaggerated green claims on its label or package etc (Kaufmann, Panni, & Orphanidou, 2012, p. 57).

Examples would include product packaging that is not biodegradable;

products that use inordinate scarce resources such as large sports utility vehicles (e.g., the Hummer) along with their unusually low fuel mileage; various chemicals and detergents that pollute the land, air, and groundwater when improperly disposed of; and medical wastes that are sometimes dumped into oceans or lakes because the proper disposal of such material is burdensome for the user (Laczniak, 2012, pp. 315, 316).

4.4 Place:

The choice of where and when to make a product available will have significant impact on the customers. Very few customers will go out of their way to buy green products (Surya & Banu, 2014, pp. 3, 4). Marketers looking to successfully introduce new green products should, in most cases, position them broadly in the market place so they are not just appealing to a small green niche market (Pandi, 2015, p. 52).

The location must also be consistent with the image you want to project and allow you to project your own image rather than being dominated or compromised by the image of the venue. The location must differentiate you from your competitors. This can be achieved by in-store promotions and visually appealing displays or using recycled materials to emphasize the environmental and other benefits. Green distribution is a very delicate operation. Customers must be guaranteed of the 'Ecological nature' of the product. The green environment is a constantly regulated environment and as such high level of compliance is necessary when carrying out distribution of green products. This is a common procedure in the united state (Pandi, 2015, p. 52).

5. CONCLUSION

Today people around the world are becoming more aware of the rising environmental challenges. Thus, companies have adopted green marketing concept as a mean to confront and implement solutions to environmental challenges by offering products that satisfy human needs or wants, with no harm to the environment and therefore enhancing sustainable development.

The concept of green marketing is gaining increasing prominence across the world, and has evolved into three phases, starting from the "Ecological" green marketing, then "Environmental" green marketing, and the third phase was "Sustainable" green marketing as a result of the emergence of sustainable development, where more and more companies are adopting policies of environmental sustainability.

Green marketing strategies provide more benefits to consumers and the society as a whole. However; getting more benefits from green marketing faces a lot of challenges, as it is entirely a new concept which will take a lot of time and effort to be accepted, and marketers need to be patient to achieve the long-term

benefits, and avoid unethical practices when promoting their green products to make profits in short term such as greenwashing, misleading advertising, or deceptive packaging, while the first rule of green marketing is focusing on consumer satisfaction and benefits instead of focusing on profits.

Like conventional marketers, green marketers must address the green marketing mix or the '4Ps' in an innovative manner, mainly developing green based product strategies including: recycling, reduction of packaging materials, dematerializing the products; using sustainable source of raw materials, making more durable products; designing repairable products, making products that are safe for disposal, and promoting products and services that satisfy customers' wants and needs for quality, performance, affordable pricing and convenience all without a detrimental impact on the environment, as well as taking the responsibility of making consumers understand the need for and benefits of green products to maintain a cleaner and greener environment.

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