

Barriers to Adopt Green Brands in India: Consumer's Perspective

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Abstract

This paper aims to review the barriers to adopt Green Brands in India through a Consumer's point of view and what a brand can keep in mind to develop a green product for Indian consumers, This view point paper is a compilation of different barriers mentioned by various authors in their research papers, The study finds that pricing , peer influence, and past green buying behavior influence the decision to purchase green product, The article proposes a conceptual framework of factors affecting purchase intention such as factors like past environmental attitudes, social and personal norms, economic and poor product designing and management in Indian context, this study will help marketers and strategists in better understanding of these factors in formulation of better green brands

Keywords: Green brands; consumer attitude; barriers; consumer decision making; green marketing.

INTRODUCTION

There is imperative need of green and environment-friendly products for nullifying the disaster of mankind by brown products (Kulshreshtha et al., 2017). In the present scenario of massive damage to the natural environment, the individuals are expected to be more concerned and thereby, more responsive to the green initiatives. Thus, green consumers are described as the ones who take into consideration the environmental consequences of their consumption patterns, and intend to modify their purchase and consumption behaviour for reducing the environmental impact (Kumar and Ghodeswar, 2015). Sustainability issues, green brands, and environmental consciousness are on rise in emerging economies. Government and consumers are becoming conscious about environment-related problems (khare, 2015). Going green has been suggested as one of the solutions to deal with this ecological crisis. empirical research has found that people accept mark-ups on the price of green energy brands

because they want to feel better about themselves, and are not primarily interested in the objective environmental impact of their decision (Hartmann and Ibañez, 2006). As a result, every individual is recognizing the need to contribute toward decreasing his/her ecological foot prints As a socially responsible consumer, the green consumer "takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption patterns and attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change" (Webster, 1975, p. 188). Green brands are those brands who design their products and services environment friendly which is also good for consumer and society. An ecological product is defined as a product that was manufactured using toxic-free ingredients and environmentally-friendly procedures, and who is certified as such by a recognized organization (Gurau and Ranchhod, 2005). A green brand, according to Insch (2011), is a brand where environmental values constitute the brand essence, with increasing recognition and awareness of environmental

issues, emphasis on aspects of environmental sustainability in both product and place branding have become more frequent. The issues related to the environment and the term 'green marketing' are presently one of the most discussed topics in the area of academic research (Hartmann et al., 2005). A green brand identity is defined by a specific set of brand attributes and benefits related to the reduced environmental impact of the brand and its perception as being environmentally sound (Hartmann et al., 2005). The term green marketing refers to the 'holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the needs of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way' (Peattie and Charter, 1997, p. 389). As good as it sounds but like any other new term consumers are unable to understand terms like eco – friendly, organic, going green and environment friendly. Understanding consumers' attitudes towards environment can help in devising sustainable marketing strategies (Khare, 2014).

A consumer wants quality products but is not willing to pay a premium. While we suppose a consumer buys a product for its features, functions or its price, the consumer's brain tells us something different from the usual perspective.

The neuroscience shows that this developed organ develops preferences on the basis of the intuitional relation with the product's brand and not on the basis of the advertising message (Singh et al., 2014). Environmental degradation, pollution, and destruction of natural resources are increasing due to rapid industrialization. Encouraged by rapidly augmenting global demand for natural products, companies increasingly seek to make links between their green credentials and a positive, attractive lifestyle. As (Meletis and Campbell, 2007) noted that concerned consumers are opting for those products and services perceived least harmful to the natural environment, such as eco-friendly holidays, which presents a strong business case to focus product and place advertising on green credentials. The purpose of this paper is to identify the challenges and barriers to adopt green brands in India despite consumer's positive attitude towards

environment. The green marketing of product and services has attained a lot of significance in India in the recent past. The consumers have become more responsible towards the environment and are opting for eco-friendly purchases and considering socially responsible purchase behavior as more apt (Haanpaa, 2007). Although green consumerism is on the rise, an attitude-behaviour gap still exists (Alwitt and Pitts, 1996; Gupta and Ogden, 2009). Unfortunately, studies on green buyer behaviour in the Indian context are very few. In this paper we will discuss some common and uncommon barriers in green brand marketing through a consumer's point of view.

Literature Review

A green brand is defined as "A green brand is one that offers a significant eco-advantage over the incumbents and which hence appeals to those who are willing to making green a high priority" (Grant, 2008 p.2). Green brand knowledge significantly affected consumers' attitude towards green brands (Suki, 2016). Yadav et al., (2016) noted that extensive studies had been conducted on green marketing in Western countries while minimal research on green branding and green buying behavior has been pursued in developing countries.

Green brand image may be negative if consumers perceive high potential risk associated with misleading and confusing green claims (Kalafatis and Pollard, 1999). Given the history of herbal products in India, green brands can be successful but there are very few green brands available and marketed in India. Thus, there is very little awareness about advantages of green products (Khare, 2014). This Indian consumers' knowledge about green products, organic and recyclable brands, and studies on Indian consumers' preference for green products suggest that consumers' have shown interest in green brands, but does not translate into green buying (Ishawini and Dutta 2011).

Green production processes are limited, In order to get a deeper insight into consumers' psychology, it is important to investigate how

environmental attitudes of consumers are formed. According to Chen (2010) it is 'a set of perceptions of brand in consumer's mind that is linked to environmental Commitment and environmental concerns'. Extant research also indicates that consumer attitudes are one of the most relevant predictors of green purchasing decisions (Grob, 1995; Schlegelmilch et al., 1996).

Researchers have established the view that environmental claims are more credible if attributed to green brands as compared to neutral brands (Ong and Phau, 2007). There is a growing body of knowledge on green marketing focusing mainly on four issues. These issues are: first, relevance of green marketing; second, impact of green marketing on firms' competitiveness and performance; third, attributes considered by consumers while buying green products; and fourth, improving effectiveness of green marketing (Johri and Sahasakmontri, 1998).

Various firms involve themselves in eco-friendly activities and affiliate to environmental organizations to develop a green image (Munshi and Kurian, 2005). Few companies are also making genuine efforts to preserve the environment. Besides focusing on profit brands are rapidly exploring and researching new ways, developing new ideas, and planning new strategies to position their green brands in the consumer's minds and to stay competitive in the marketplace.

In the automotive industry, Honda, Toyota, and GM, etc., have expressed their support of green brands to the public by adopting green technologies that conserve raw minerals and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG), particularly in the manufacturing of hybrid cars (part electric and part conventional), which aim to preserve the environment (Oliver and Lee, 2010). But green washing negatively affects green brand associations and brand credibility, and therefore, indirectly influence green brand equity and purchase intention (Akturan, 2018).

Consumer perceived green brand image positively contributes to the enhancement of green brand equity and results in green

satisfaction and green trust. Researchers have stressed the fact that brand positioning must meet consumer expectations so they can associate the brand with its valuable attributes (Wang, 2017). It can be difficult for green advertising campaigns to promote a trustworthy green brand image when skeptical attitudes are salient. However, researchers find that believability of consumers towards these advertisements is relatively low (Khandelwal and Bajpai, 2011). An effective green brand identity should provide benefits to environmentally conscious consumers. A lack of effective green brand can cause products to fail in the market place (Huang, 2014). However, that pressure on "being green" triggered some companies to do green washing, which is a dishonest action done to manipulate public opinion on being green (Akturan, 2018).

With consumers' increasing environmental awareness and their rising needs for green products, more and more companies would like to position their brands as being green when competing with their rivals. Changing phenomenon in the marketing world has also added new words in the dictionary of advertising, such as recyclable, environment friendly, biodegradable, etc. A well-implemented green brand identity should provide benefits to environmentally conscious consumers (Hartmann, 2005). The development of the consumer-green brand relationship is an especially difficult task due to the complexities of the specific "green" sector (Papista and Dimitriadis, 2019) some of the most successful green brands such as Body Shop and Ecover clearly did not start with the customer in the traditional marketing sense, in that they represented the vision of an entrepreneur rather than a reflection of the market (Peattie, 2005). Explained green image can be strengthened if consumers perceive that certain benefits related to the expression of their social status and self-esteem can be gained through consuming a green brand. The increasing scepticism towards green brands has a strong influence on risk perceptions which weakens the green brand image (Lin, 2017).

Why it is difficult to adopt green brands?

There are many theories for reasoned behavior by various authors and researchers across the globe some are very similar but some depends on consumer attitudes beliefs climate and demographic and economic conditions etc. in this paper we mainly focus on barriers people face in India to adopt green branding

Economic reasons

India is a land of mix economy and there is a wide gap in terms of earning and livelihood however in terms of consumer India is the most attractive market of the world. Generally, green products are expensive and thus it become a biggest hurdle in terms of showing willingness to purchase green products (Laheer et al., 2014; Johnstone and Tan, 2015; Barbarossa and Pastore, 2015; Akturan 2018; Johri and Sahasakmontri, 1998; Lu and Joseph, 2013). The high prices of green brands caused these barriers (Joshi et al., 2019), Tripathi and Pandey (2018) concluded that this price sensitivity is the main cause that consumers can not afford to buy green products

Poor ecological behaviour practices by government is the reason that green brands are expensive or overpriced (Khare, 2014). for solution companies put less effort in packaging which did not appeal consumers, relatively unattractive look of product is the reason indicated by Chakrabarti, (2010). less durable packaging by companies also become the reason for consumers to not buy green brands concluded by Tripathi and Pandey, 2018; Johnstone and Tan, (2015).

Poor marketing

Lack of marketing/promotional offers are the reason consumer is not aware of green brands According to Chowdhury and Samuel, (2014); Khare (2014); Trivedi et al., (2015); Nath et al., (2013) stated that it is difficult to identify green products so it definitely needs more marketing effort to reach consumers. Followed by this reason, not effectively communicated is the reason stated by Yadav et al., (2016) it is very confusing for a consumers to understand and recognize green brands due to poor

communication by companies to justify that (Suki, 2016) concluded that the brand positioning is reason behind consumer confusion.

Personal reasons

Personal and social values is the barrier stated by (Khare, 2014). which may not make sense to some countries but in India social influence and community stand is really influential (Khare, 2015) that can easily make or break any brand so if it is not fathomable by a person or society it is not going to work in India which again connects to poor marketing by companies and they failed to influence people for a good product which lead to another statement by Khare, (2014) and Suki, (2016) highlighted that lack of commitment towards environmentally friendly practices/sustainability is reason people are not able to trust green brands are genuine or not. if we talk about personal reasons than Trivedi et al., (2015); Suki, (2016) evaluated that non pro-environmental are mostly insensitive to environmental messages. In the studies of Khandelwal and Bajpai, (2011) and Rejikumar, (2016) stated that some people are skeptical attitudes towards green advertising and they are not easily change their choices even for a good cause. this directly connects to few bad Past experience underlined by Huang and Yang, (2014) it can creates a Psychological factor in consumer's mind which lead to lack of desire to shop concluded by Barbarossa and Pastore, (2015). Perceived personal inconvenience highlighted by Joshi et al., (2019) for consumers who are not willing to go to a certain shop at a specific location just to buy green brands, lack of products in market definitely cause for personal inconvenience for some consumers.

Product Management

Green brands are in existence from a long time now but somehow we still consider it as a new concept or the way companies present them when they introduce their products despite having people on board with the idea. Lack of effective green brand is somehow still remain an issue it only make consumer confuse or skeptic (Huang and Yang, 2014).

Lack of availability is always an issue in case of green brands Chowdhury and Samuel, (2014). These products are not widely available everywhere so it is not easy for a consumer to switch brands whenever it should reach consumer easily to convert them in to their loyal customers

Perceived product risk act as an barrier for green brands, it is as simple as that if a consumer buys a product that's green in nature but not sure about the performance or the money he paid for the product is worth spending on ,he is not going to buy the product anytime soon or not going to switch to that green brand easily ,companies needs to find some way to present their green brands approachable for the consumers to prevent the risk

choice of green product is very limited in market, lack of green products act as an main barrier for green brands to grow as normal brands which concludes that there are very few products available to choose from green brands but as a consumer everyone wants some variety to compare and choose from that all together creates a barrier in consumer's mind to switch to green brands.

Consumer perception

Lack of awareness is common barrier highlighted by Chowdhury and Samuel, (2014); Chakrabarti, (2010); Khare, (2015); Suki, (2016) towards green brand. In today's world where every brand claiming to have best product or service it is very difficult to consumers to understand that what they are using is not good for environment or society, they are simply not aware about it which is discouraging for green brands and creates an unknown barrier consumers and companies not even know about.

Skepticism towards label claims /authenticity

Skepticism towards label claims and authenticity of green brand is the very common barrier mentioned by various authors in their research papers (Joshi et al., 2019; Chakrabarti, 2010; Khare, 2015; Khandelwal and Bajpai, 2011). There are no measure to check the

authenticity of a green brand in general and consumers become very skeptic towards label's claim hence creates a barrier in their mind to purchase green brands .

Green brand concept is here from a long time but not long to get people used to it, not properly introduced to people lead this concept to still unknown to many consumers till now

It is not unknown to people that green washing is brand impersonating as a green brand which creates lack of trust in people for the concept of green brand altogether which directly creates barrier for people to trust genuine green brands.

Brand Attachment

Johnstone and Tan (2015); Akturan (2018) founded in their research that people feel comfortable with certain brands and they do not want to leave that comfort zone easily which is fairly challenging for a expensive green brand to replace that.

Discussion

Different people have different preferences so it is really hard to understand for the companies to understand the changing mindset of consumer's, study shows that there is huge understanding and economical gap between green brands and consumers, Johri and Sahasakmontri,(1998) noted that the initial dominance of marketing in the "greening" of business has now ended, Not only have consumers become inured to "green" messages, but many no longer trust the commitment of the businesses promoting themselves as environmentally-responsible, as we discussed about consumers perspective so here are some of the problems and suggestions to the brands from a consumer point of view to make companies understand the benefits of green products and how they Can build better green brand image

Brands should reduce price to increase accessibility and initiate few awareness campaigns to clear the confusion of consumer about green brands also focus on Attractive products and packaging so that consumer can

feel to get the product worth their money, to make consumer to adopt green products as their regular product brands needs to have a better supply chain Management for green brands

Green practice will not only helps brands to gain trust of people and build a better image but also to achieve Less Carbon foot printing, Brands needs to make sure that green brands should be widely available everywhere but to achieve that not to compromise quality with practicing green washing.

Despite doing all these things some companies face the failure because Retailers are not stocking green products as people generally don't buy them or not aware of its benefits also Poor product design act as an barrier to attract any retailer or consumer towards that particular product as generally it's on higher price category than normal product and consumers don't feel to buy unattractive pricey product specially if it's a new brand , few already established companies should enter in to green branding as they have already gained the trust of masses

Though we are discussing the consumer's perspective but here are my very few suggestions to the consumers to meet brands mid way for the betterment for their own health and our environment and economy. Consumer should not be skeptical they should read labels and to be able to differentiate between fake and genuine green brand also To give an open mind to green brands for their health and environment's betterment they should not choose money over health as green brands can be little overpriced than normal brands so consumer don't easily switch to green brands

Consumer needs to understand that a Small step toward green concept will make bigger impact in our environment but for that consumer's need to be a smart shopper and to be beware of concepts like green washing as not all green brands claim by companies are genuine.

Consumer should support local green brands to contribute to economy of their country so they can grow and mass production will help these brands to reduce price of green products.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper to evaluate the barriers and relationship between brands and consumers but there is limited research in India to understand consumer's green brand purchase behavior, there appears to be limited awareness about green branding

Promotional campaign should provide information about the impact of green branding on environment. Companies promoting green brand should be appreciated more for their efforts by the government, consumers may be willing to purchase green brands but money is the major barrier in their way to maintain their finances

In future studies we can study and understand company's point of view and barrier they are facing to adopt green concept.

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