

GREEN ADVERTISING AS A PRECURSOR TO SUSTAINABLE MARKETING

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Abstract

With the world struggling to find newer discourses of marketing for inflating profit margins and widening public image, the ecological environment scenario has opened new frontiers for businesses. The environmental movement has gained momentum in the past several decades. There has been a rise in the availability of organic goods, an uplift in the demand for fuel-efficient automobiles and a general desire among customers to have some kind of positive environmental impact. Communications professionals are capitalizing on going green to pique their audience's attention and move products off shelves thereby leading to eco-centric sustainable marketing. Products with green packaging, print advertising featuring "green" scenes and commercials touting environmental benefits all actually refer to sustainable environment marketing, either directly or implicitly. An increasing imbalance in the carbon footprint has paved the way to Green Marketing and one of its competitive weapons is Green Advertising which aims at infusing a spirit of corporate environmental responsibility among both marketers and consumers. Green advertising is slated towards moulding consumer behaviour in the direction of eco-centrism and at the same time providing a competitive edge to the marketer above its rivals. The purpose of this conceptual study, which employs an exploratory research approach, is to establish a mechanism by which green advertising acts as a precursor to sustainable marketing by application of qualitative research technique (grounded theory embedded conceptual framework analysis). The paper holds implications for researchers as well as social advocates of sustainable marketing, environmental strategists and green marketers.

Keywords: Corporate Environmental Responsibility, Ecocentrism, Green Advertising, Sustainable Marketing.

1.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To qualitatively unfold the mechanism by which Green advertising acts as a precursor to Sustainable marketing via application of grounded theory embedded conceptual framework analysis and subsequently draft a conceptual framework/ construct for it.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that environmental concerns affect every aspect of human life, very few studies have included green topics in their literature. In the current scenario of marketing, this is of paramount importance. Businesses have started to make changes in response to the growing environmental consciousness of the general public. Some companies have embraced environmental management strategies and waste reduction, incorporating various measures into every aspect of their operations. In the present context and for the preservation of future generations, the ecosystem has been greatly affected by the negative influence on natural resources owing to human activities. The notion of marketing has evolved in response to the growing ecological imbalance. To adapt to the changing needs of customers, every company is scrambling to develop novel ways to increase profits and build a positive reputation. Green Advertising attempts to quantify the worth of goods and services in relation to ecological issues. It has been noticed that some businesses and marketers have started using it as a gimmick with no real concern for the environment. A lack of transparency in advertising the product as "green" leads to consumers seeking out data and information about the product that may or may not be accurate. A more effective business plan for environmentally friendly goods must be developed by the company using the appropriate media in order to raise public awareness. Advertisers should make such an impression on consumer's thoughts that every time they go to make a purchase, they instantly think about eco-friendly options. Green advertising is predicated on the idea that if customers are made aware of the benefits of green goods and services over their non-green counterparts, they would adopt a more favourable attitude towards the former. Therefore, it is a plethora of purposes served by green advertising that cascades consumer engagement, and eco-centric consumption in the direction of green sustainability. This paper attempts to unfold this cascade logically by fragmenting the entire literature into workable frames based on points of parity.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Marketing Evolution

About a century has passed since marketing was initially established as a distinct academic discipline (Wilkie, W. L., & Moore, E. S., 2003). In 1905, "University of Pennsylvania" introduced the world to the concept of a specialized marketing course with the introduction of "The Marketing of Products" (Peattie and Belz, 2010). The development of management as a popular field of study in the 1970s and the subsequent proliferation of business and management-focused academic programs are inextricably related to the growth of marketing as an interdisciplinary subject (Nicolau, A. I., Musetescu, A., & Mionel, O., 2014). First established as a subfield of applied microeconomics, marketing studies consumer behaviour and distribution processes as the basis for market clearing procedures in times of overproduction (Wilkie & Moore, 2003). Since then, the idea went through a number of shifts, and the marketing industry

as a whole went through a number of shifts as well. Stages of marketing evolution (Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I., 2019):

- a) Product-driven approach - aiming for maximum sales growth with minimum expenditure.
- b) Customer-centric focus - suggests that consumers are seen only as objects to be manipulated by businesses.
- c) A value-driven era - people are seen not as commercial targets, but as collaborators who are insightful and empathetic as well as intellectual and spiritual beings.

Marketing methods, in particular, have evolved greatly as a result of shifting consumer demands and expectations (Kumar, V., Z., & Goyal, P. Kazmi, Rahman, A. A., 2012).

3.2 Recent Trends in Marketing

1. **Green Marketing** - Peattie (2001) defined green marketing as "marketing actions that lessen environmental and social consequences of current products and manufacturing systems by marketing less hazardous products." Importance of green marketing to firms (a) Green marketing is seen as a potential avenue for corporations to pursue in order to fulfill their goals (Keller 1987, Shearer 1990), (b) There is a widespread sentiment among businesses that they must fulfill their social responsibility (Davis 1992) and (c) Companies are forced to change their behaviour as a result of the costs involved with trash collection, disposal or reductions in the quantity of resources used (Azzone and Manzini, 1994).

2. **Eco-labeling** - The labels on things are there to show what they are. First-time buyers might benefit greatly from the information provided by Eco-Labeling (Hossain, M. I., & Rahman, M. S., 2018). With the use of ecolabels, buyers are able to quickly identify eco-friendly goods as distinct from conventional ones as eco-labelling that encourages people to purchase environmentally friendly goods (Awan, Bukhari & Iqbal, 2011).

3. **Viral Marketing** - defines any effort to get people to spread promotional messages to a wider audience, which may lead to a dramatic increase in that messages reach and impact. Such tactics, much like viruses, rely on fast amplification to rapidly spread the word to hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people. (Wilson, R. F., 2000).

4. **Marketing via Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** - A corporation's accountability extends beyond its stockholders. Numerous other parties, such as members of the general public and the natural ecosystem in which it functions, fall within the umbrella of its sphere of responsibility (Chakraborty, A., & Jha, A., 2019). CSR has been empirically tested effective means through which social goals may be incorporated into marketing dynamics (Gonzalez-Padron and Nason, 2009).

5. **Sustainable Marketing** - The goal of sustainable marketing is to not only satisfy the demands of the current market, but also to take into account the demands of future

markets (Seretny, M., & Seretny, A., 2012). All components of the marketing mix have to be repurposed and re-oriented in order for sustainable marketing to be implemented; this includes everything from the developing products and packaging to the positioning as well as the advertising (Sheth, J. N., & Parvatiyar, A., 2021).

3.3 Marketing through the Lens of Eco-Centrism

Marketing came under fire for being at odds with environmental concerns when they were shown to advocate for practices that prioritized profit maximization above environmental protection (Levy and Zaltman, 1975 & Peattie, 1995). However, in the current scenario marketing is a crucial component of addressing environmental issues, whether through encouraging environmentally conscious buying behaviour, instilling a concern for the natural environment in the minds of the workforce, or spreading knowledge about ecologically responsible methods of production (Leonidou, C. N. & Leonidou, L.C., 2011). Kotler and Levy (1969) are credited as being the first to publish on the topic of social marketing strategy. Their seminal work sparked a plethora of follow-up studies on environmental concerns, including investigations into "social responsibility and marketing" (Zaltman and Kotler, 1971), "ecologically responsible customers" (Kinneer et al., 1974), and "eco-centric marketing" (Kassarjian, 1971). Sustainable company strategies are shaped by eco-centric marketing techniques. Ecological marketing has been an effective competitive advantage and a cutting-edge method of doing business by making better use of the earth's scarce resources (Jarin, A., 2014). Eco-centric marketing's basic idea is that it facilitates the re-evaluation and, ultimately, the transformation of company practices into those that are less harmful to the environment (Lozada, 1999). Since an increasing number of customers would prefer to support eco-friendly businesses, it's imperative that managers and entrepreneurs include environmental considerations in daily operations (Kotler., P, 2011). Companies are taking steps to lessen the environmental effect of their commercial activities and are adopting sustainability as a guiding principle in the development of new solutions (Borin, N., & Metcalf, L., 2010). Ecocentrism may aid in the long-term success of the industry by establishing a culture of cooperation, engagement, and transformation among rival companies (Child et al., 2005; Hart, 1995).

Eco-centric marketing strategies should be based on the following:

- a) Encourage the use of eco-friendly practices throughout the product life cycle.
- b) Get your business and residential power needs to be met with renewable energy sources like photovoltaics and bioenergy.
- c) Restore natural habitats and work to protect and preserve biodiversity.
- d) Raise awareness of people's personal roles in safeguarding nature and wildlife.
- e) Economic growth, cooperation, and innovation may be ensured for the future if governments provide funding for the eco-centric industry, business, and research and development. (Borland, H., & Lindgreen, A. 2013)

3.4 Communication Appeals in Green Advertising

It is crucial for a business to generate awareness and understanding about the work of the organisation, and communication must occur spontaneously through wide variety of media (Biloslavo & Trnavcevic, 2009). There are a variety of advertisements that transmit information, including those that focus on the product directly and those which highlight the individual benefits of buying the goods, and that emphasize only the environmental advantages (Grimmer & Woolley, 2014). Green Advertising that emphasizes environmental advantages are called green communication and are used to urge consumers to "go green." There are three requirements for eco-friendly advertising:

- (1) How the biophysical setting interacts with the products;
- (2) Promote eco-friendly practices, whether or not they feature a specific product or service;
- (3) Promote, maintain, or introduce an image of corporate social responsibility toward the environment.

Green advertising is image-focused while others contend that they feature either educational content (stakeholders) or commercial content (buyers to purchase) (Banerjee, Gulas & Iyer, 1995; Tiwari et al., 2011). Both textual and visual statements are used on eco-labels to educate consumers about waste management practices, environmentally friendly production and packaging. For example, eco-labels are used to communicate the message that something is environmentally friendly (Jerzyk, 2016). There are four main ideas that show how powerful an eco-label is:

- I. Scope (number of covered environmental concerns, capability, variety of labelled items);
- II. Stakeholder requirements are taken into account; this is an example of participatory democracy;
- III. Uptake is autonomous and accepted; this is proof that the label is influential; this is an example of participatory democracy.
- IV. Ecological and sustainable consumption results that can be quantified, proving natural capital preservation and fairness throughout generations (Horne, 2009).

An ever-increasing degree towards environmental responsibility may be seen in today's commercial settings. Although there is now a greater supply of environmentally friendly and pro-environment commodities as a result of increasing attention to environmental concerns, customers' buying behaviour is not more environmentally friendly. (Pickett-Baker and Ozaki 2008). A lot of the time, people talk a big game about caring about the environment, but their spending habits don't reflect that (Chang 2011; Essoussi and Linton 2010). According to research conducted on the topic of consumption of eco-friendly goods, performance with respect to perception of the product is a major

barrier to purchasing (Ottman 1998). The term "eco-label" refers to any emblem, logo, sign or symbol applied to the packaging of a product directed at customers, indicating that the product is much safer for the environment than other available options (Tang, Fryxell & Chow, 2004). To embrace and have a precise meaning of eco-labels, consumers must know which firm awards them, who verifies the goods, and who controls the manufacturing process (D'Souza et al., 2006). Additionally, in order to issue eco-labels, awarding organizations utilize "fitness-for-use" standards that consider the entire (PLC) product life cycle, from extracting raw materials through manufacture, packaging, and distribution to consumer usage, and finally from the recycling to the source material. As a result, whenever eco-labels are being used internationally and with significant government involvement, their credibility grows and they are widely recognized (Tang et al., 2004).

3.5 Green Advertising as Foundation of Sustainable Marketing

In 1974, the U.S. (FTC) Federal Trade Commission released a study outlining guidelines for environment-friendly commercials. There are two distinct types of claims that may be made in green advertising: 1. associative claims 2. Substantive claims (Carlson et al. 1996; Easterling et., al., 1996; Kim and Han 2015). Substantive claims highlight the tangible advantages to the environment that can be derived from using a given product or method of production, while associative claims focus on establishing a connection between the brand or product and a "green" image, rather than highlighting any actual advantages to the environment (Carlson, Grove, and Kangun 1993). Studies on the effects of green advertising show that it is successful in influencing consumers' attitudes and intentions to take action (Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius 1995). Individuals who care deeply about a problem are more likely to actively consider marketing messaging. They are willing to shift their perspective after being persuaded, but only if the new information is in line with their existing worldview. Individuals who are less interested, on the other hand, will look around for other evidence (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Consumers with a strong interest in environmental concerns may respond favourably to green advertising, adopting its themes and altering their perception of and desire to engage with the brand (Shin, S., Ki, E. J., & Griffin, W. G., 2017). For a profit-making company engagement, customers are more inclined to suspect greenwashing than if a non-profit were to make the claims. Deceptive public relations tactics used by corporations for financial gain have been related to the greenwashing phenomenon. The phrase "greenwashing" is not known by consumers (Walsh 2008). In a study conducted by Cone in 2013 Customers who realized a green claim was false stated that they would cease purchasing the connected goods. Consumers may associate the goal of green advertising supported by a for-profit entity with greenwashing depending on how they feel about for-profit corporations' green communications, while they might ascribe the goal of a non-profit company's green advertising to sincere environmental efforts. When an advertisement promoting pro-social concerns comes from a non-profit organization rather than a for-profit one, consumers also tend to view it favourably.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is novel in its methodology since it is exploratory in nature. The material has been mined from a database of reputable secondary sources using a methodical search and extraction process (by employing topic-specific keywords). In this qualitative study, the whole body of literature is divided into five categories according to their degree of similarity. As a qualitative research method, conceptual framework analysis is used to the consistency found in all five time periods. This conceptual paper uses an inductive reasoning process since the results are presented in a linear fashion, moving from specific to more generalized conclusions depending on the author's and the audience's assumptions.

5.0 FINDINGS

The probable findings of the paper are an outcome of grounded theory embedded conceptual framework analysis and can be narrated as:

- Green advertising serves as a first step (precursor) that may influence the purchasing choices of consumers in a way that protects the environment when communication is properly done.
 - Because of the causes and effects of climate change, economic effects, the depletion of the ozone layer, the loss of biodiversity, the endangerment of species, acid rain, public health issues and a reduction in the quality of standard living, etc., organizations are being forced to shift towards green advertising.
 - The environment is impacted favourably when an organisation adopts the notion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
 - If customers were provided with accurate advertising information about environmentally friendly goods and services eg: ecolabels, logos, design etc it would have a significant impact on the purchasing decisions they make.
 - Green advertising leads to consumer engagement in green brands subsequently directing eco-centric consumption as the foundation of sustainable marketing.

A conceptual framework has been proposed keeping in line with the above observations and represented by figure 1.

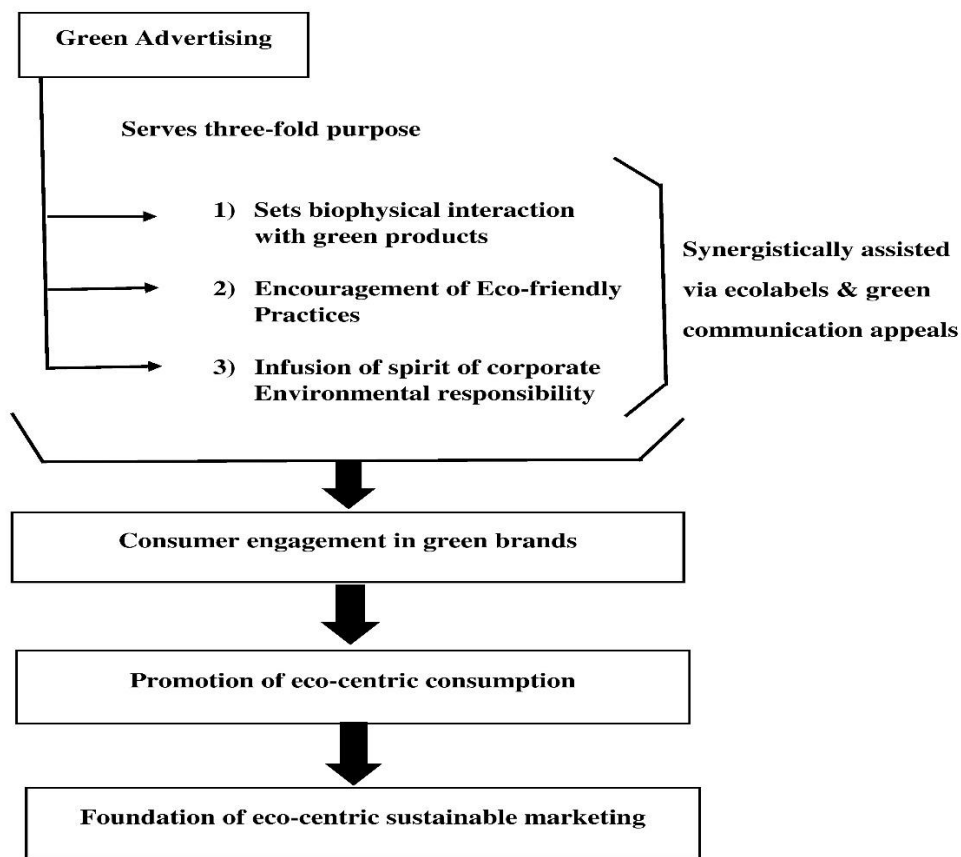


Figure 1: Conceptual framework revealing the mechanism by which Green Advertising acts as a precursor to sustainable marketing

6.0 CONCLUSION

Priorly, marketers just cared about making money for their companies and doesn't have concerns about creating a green framework or reducing environmental impacts. When the company first started out, manufacturing environment-safe items wasn't a top priority. However, as time went on, the company saw the catastrophic effects of Mother Nature and felt enormous pressure to change its manufacturing methods. Due to the alarming rise in environmental issues, people everywhere are feeling obligated to take action on behalf of the environment. In order to trick consumers into thinking their purchase has some kind of environmental benefit, astute marketers portray the product as "green" even when it has none. Consumers are gradually getting aware of the advertiser's environmentally friendly practices. With the right marketing techniques in place, such as Green Designing, Green Pricing, Green Packaging, Green Positioning, etc., green advertising may influence customer behavior and further lay the foundation of sustainable marketing. For customers who may otherwise fall for the false

environmental promises made by advertisements, determining if "greenwashing". Green advertising creates a sense of responsibility and motivates consumers to learn more about eco-friendly goods and make more environmentally conscious purchasing decisions. This is how they may engage in green brand purchases and subsequent adoption of sustainable marketing may be facilitated. Marketers, eco-social activists, advertising firms, green politicians, and maybe even the government as a whole might all stand to gain much from reading this study.

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