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Usefulness of Social Media for Marketing of Green Products

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Abstract

As global environmental concerns continue to rise, businesses are increasingly focusing on sustainable and eco-friendly products, giving rise to the market for green products. This paper explores the significance of social media as a powerful tool for marketing green products and fostering sustainability initiatives. The study delves into the unique characteristics of social media platforms that make them particularly effective for promoting environmentally conscious products. The research investigates the role of social media in shaping consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing behaviors related to green products. A comprehensive review of existing literature highlights the diverse strategies employed by businesses to leverage social media platforms, including influencer marketing, user-generated content, and targeted advertising, to enhance the visibility and appeal of green products. Furthermore, the paper examines case studies and real-world examples of successful social media campaigns for green products, analyzing the key factors that contribute to their effectiveness. The impact of social media on building brand loyalty and fostering a sense of community around sustainability is also explored, shedding light on the long-term

benefits for businesses engaging in environmentally friendly marketing practices. The study aims to provide valuable insights for marketers, businesses, and policymakers seeking to understand the dynamics of utilizing social media for the promotion of green products. By offering a nuanced perspective on the intersection of digital marketing and sustainability, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on responsible and impactful business practices in the context of a rapidly evolving global marketplace.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Sustainable Development, Green Products, Social Media, online

I. INTRODUCTION

The concern for the environment has increased more than ever. Major issues for the concern are the threats of air pollution, global warming, food waste, etc. which are making us think to be more kind towards the planet. Accordingly, people are advancing towards environmental health and supporting socially responsible and environmentally friendly products, despite their higher cost. Getting hands-on with this trend, companies are now inculcating such strategies which try to hook consumers and address socially responsible behaviour. More specifically, companies are turning towards green initiatives and thus influencing purchasing decisions of consumers. Consumer's green purchase behavior is one of the oldest yet important areas which is studied extensively to understand green marketing (Kumar & Polonsky, 2017). Considering marketing strategy and growth, consumers prove to be critical stakeholders (Mele et al., 2019; Trang et al., 2019). While marketing a product, studying consumer behaviour by businesses is an important aspect as it helps in understanding the main factors influencing consumer buying decisions. Through this, the marketers can fill the gap by identifying products that are needed and the products which became obsolete. In contemporary times, the growing public inclination towards environmental issues is increasingly pivotal in environmental education. Mere positive attitudes towards the environment are insufficient; what is crucial is the actual behavior of individuals. Many people feel uncertain and lack the necessary tools to act for the environment. However, Web 2.0 and social media have emerged as potent platforms capable of amplifying environmental awareness and fostering sustainable behavior among the people (Ballew, Omoto, & Winter, 2015). As today's market is consumer-driven, therefore, social media provides a platform for marketers in understanding consumer needs, improving existing products, discovering innovation and learning about consumer behavior (Kamra, 2015).

There are various types of social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Linked In, etc. which permit users to create, communicate and interact with information and other product/ service-related information (Statista, 2021). Users have the freedom to initiate, create and share information in a virtual world (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2006). The information so generated is used for educating the consumers about different products and services available or various initiatives taken by firms or individuals (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).

Background

With the advent of globalization, there is an increase in expectations from the already established as well as new companies to think about environmental and social issues such as environmentally friendly production or unsafe working conditions, etc. rather than just profit-seeking (Abdelaziz, Saeed, & Benleulm, 2015). Even a lot of pressure is exerted by the government and non-government organizations as well as by customers and employees to incorporate environmental-related thinking in their policies and strategies (Carter & Easton, 2011). The success of marketing green products on social media is not an easy task. The influence on the environmental-related emotions of the consumers requires deep knowledge of the factors of social media. If not understood properly, it could lead to various problems such as green marketing myopia (Ottman et al., 2006), green spinning, green selling and compliance marketing (Peattie & Crane, 2005). The marketing of green products using social media is therefore an interesting area for researchers around the world. Thus, deep knowledge about the influencing factors is highly required by marketers in developing green strategies.

Literature Review

Consumer's green purchase behavior is one of the oldest yet important areas which is studied extensively to understand green marketing (Kumar & Polonsky, 2017). Considering marketing strategy and growth, consumers prove to be critical stakeholders (Mele et al., 2019). While marketing a product, studying consumer behaviour by businesses is an important aspect as it helps in understanding the main factors influencing consumer buying decisions. Through this, the marketers can fill the gap by identifying products that are needed and the products which became obsolete. Past studies have defined the above concept in different ways. The psychology literature discusses the concept using terms like green behaviour and pro-environment behaviour (Han, 2020). According to Khan et al. (2020), Green behaviour which is also known as pro-environmental behaviour, sustainable behaviour, environmentally friendly behaviour or ecological behaviour, can be classified into two standard groups namely reduction of energy resource consumption and green purchase behaviour.

The most frequently used behaviour to depict green behaviour among consumers is through green purchasing (Dong et al., 2020). Green purchase behaviour refers to preventing the environment from pollution by purchasing green products or services where such purchasing and choice of green products is derived from the pro-environmental decision-making process (Han, 2020; Garvey & Bolton, 2017).

Consumers practicing these activities generates minimal environmental impact thus benefiting the environment (Minton et al., 2018). In consumer behaviour literature, green purchase behaviour can be defined as the behaviour of individuals towards environmental sustainability (Halder et al., 2020).Hans (2021), described green consumption behaviour as a specific behaviour resulting in benefiting the environment while consuming it. Haanpaa (2007), described three elements that facilitate green consumption behaviour i.e., contextual, individual, and personality. As per the Theory of Reasoned Action, attitude with social factors helps in shaping the immediate precursor of actual action i.e., behavioural intention. (Meng et al., 2020;Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Ajzen & Kruglanski, 2019). According to this model, attitude can be defined as a combination of beliefs in context of behaviour, consequences of behaviour and the evaluation of the outcome, which is the judgment of the consequences as favourable or unfavourable. On the other hand, the subjective norm is defined as the perceived social approval or disapproval for a particular behaviour. It is a combination of normative beliefs (behavioural expectation of others) and motivation to comply with others (Moon, 2021). In marketing literature, the Green term is used to describe products or brands as well asit is used in the area of consumer behaviour and marketing activities that reduce harmful environmental impact (Peattie, 2001; Bearse et al., 2009; Sun & Wang, 2020). Despite concerns for the environment, green also comprises ethical concerns of business activities (Tanner & Wolfiging Kast, 2003). The new trend of business has now shifted from profit-making to environmental favouritism (Kotler, 2011).

The past few decades have shown technology revolutionizing our lives and mass communication is one of its biggest transformations. When life began to transform after the industrial revolution, mass communication was developing in all aspects. Some ofthe significant theories among the past stated theories, have been listed below. Since ecommerce and social commerce are closely related (Wang & Zhang, 2012), therefore theories relating to e-commerce were also found significant in the context of social commerce.

Objectives of the Study

- 1.To extract significant variables from the models related to Online Social Media Marketing Activities in the context of green products.
2. To find out any differences in consumer demographics in the context of green purchase behaviour.

Research Questions

After conducting research background and stating research problems, the researcher comes up with some questions that need to be addressed for an in-depth study on online social media factors in green product context and consumer green purchase behavior.

1. What factors of Social Media helps in marketing of green products?
2. Can Social Media be used to increase consumers' green purchase behavior in Indian context?

Research Gaps

The following research gaps were identified:

1. Neglected disaggregation of online social media constructs in the context of green products.
2. Researchers are studying the impact of social media in general on environmental concerns but its consequences are overlooked.

Research Design

Both exploratory and conclusive research designs are incorporated in the present study. In the preliminary stage, because of the confusion and uncertainty of the important research variables regarding social media and green purchase decisions, the relationships and the methodology used were exploratory to explore the relevant constructs of social media bearing linkage with green purchase decisions. Conclusive research was carried for in-depth exploration and analysis of the relationship among variables associated with social media marketing of green products to arrive at some definite conclusion (Malhotra and Dash, 2011). A formal and structured process was administered, for defining samples, collecting data, incorporating quantitative data analysis and illustrating findings with conclusions and various implications for managers. The nature of the present study was descriptive as it was incorporated to report or describe the various constructs and their interrelationships among themselves. Since the data was generated only once from a single sample of respondents, thus a single cross-sectional design is considered for the present study.

Questionnaire

The present questionnaire has three sections. First part consisted of screening questions for filtering respondents to fit for the present survey. The second part was designed to capture demographic information of the respondents, while the third part recorded the consumer's perceptions about social media marketing activities (Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, Customization and Word of Mouth), Environmental Concern, Attitude towards Green Products and Willingness to Pay for

green products. A five-point Likert scale was taken for the statements to measure the varying degree of opinion and belief of the respondents. The numerical value was assigned from 1 to 5 for analysis.

Data Analysis

H1: There is a significant difference between males and females in their Environmental Concern.

H2: There is a significant difference between males and females in their Willingness to Pay for green products.

Table 5.11: t-test Analysis for Gender

Variable	Males		Females		T-Value	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
EC	3.271	0.972	3.321	0.994	-0.503	0.615
WTP	3.264	1.157	3.371	1.056	-0.933	0.352

The significance value was more than 0.05 which exhibited that consumers of different gender do not differ in their level of EC. Since, for the two genders, the mean values of the construct EC showed no difference, therefore, the above hypothesis H1 was found not supported.

The significance value was more than 0.05 which exhibited that consumers of different gender do not differ in their level of WTP. Since, for the two genders, the mean values of the construct WTP showed no difference, therefore, the above hypothesis H2 was found not supported.

Findings

Interaction and Customization helps in developing Environmental Concern among consumers. The positive orientation of consumers towards green products i.e., Attitude towards Green Products is formed by their concern for the environment. Word of Mouth was found to be an effective social media marketing activity for developing Attitude towards Green Products. Findings related to environmental attributes resulted in identification of gender, age, education and income being insignificantly associated.

II. CONCLUSION

Utilization of social media for promoting green products sees a rise in engagement activities like interaction and customization, fostering environmental consciousness among consumers. The influence of user-generated content, specifically word-of-mouth, proves to be a potent strategy in social media marketing for shaping attitudes towards eco-friendly products. The inclination to engage in a behaviour is shaped by a favourable attitude towards it, indicating that consumers willing to purchase green

products despite added costs are primarily driven by their positive perceptions of such products. The information shared on social media sites will help marketers in making consumers involved in searching and relying on it thus, developing green purchase behaviour. The customization feature on green brand pages will help marketers in gaining and implementing innovative ideas.

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