Consumer Satisfaction through the Positioning of Fundamental Consumer Value Ingredients can Enhance the Opportunity of Green Marketing

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine whether fundamental consumer value ingredients in green product have noteworthy relationship with consumer satisfaction or not to attract mainstream consumers to consume green to enhance the concept of ‘Green Marketing’. Organic food has been selected as an effective means to investigate the research objective. As a part of quantitative research method questionnaire survey was conducted on a total of 680 consumers especially at super market areas of London and Scotland. A comprehensive descriptive analysis revealed that consumers highly demand indentified non-green consumer value ingredients along with existing green value ingredients in green food to get them satisfied. The analysis also found that consumers are no longer interested to pay high price premium for green food which solely concentrate on green value claims rather consumers are more likely to pay extra cost if the product effectively blend green and non-green value ingredients in green products. Therefore, a strong relationship has been discovered between consumer satisfaction and green consumption with the presence of fundamental consumer value ingredients.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Green value positioning, Fundamental consumer value ingredients, Green value elements

1. Introduction

In this rising concern of environmental degradation, the American Marketing Association, first took the formal initiative to bring the ecological important issue to the public, business houses and to the researchers in 1975( Henion and Kinnear 1976). Precisely, this concerned practice led to the birth of a phenomenal environmental marketing concept of ‘Green Marketing’ which incorporates all the activities to satisfy human needs with minimal detrimental effect on natural environment (Charter and Polonsky 1999).

In the late 80’s the era of management was abruptly expanded by the discussion of ‘green marketing’, ‘green product’, ‘green consumerism’ and ‘green consumption’. ‘GREEN’ became the new buzzword of marketing (Peattie 1995) took the massive attention of consumers behavior (Peattie 1995; Schlegelmilch et al. 1996A survey from Vandermerwe and Oliff (1990) found that more than 90% European multinationals stated to alter their production process to move with the society’s new concern of ‘green’. Most of the organizations became shortsightedted and busy with only selling and public relations activities but very few had actual connection with green claims and most importantly the actual need of consumers to satisfy them(Peattie 1995). The upshot of this shortsightedness came very early while this euphoric discovery of environmental marketing was subsided, failed to continue its growing market share in the middle of 1990(Peattie and Carne 2005). The fall of this exhilarated idea made researcher busy to sort out the smokescreen story behind the fall and consequently came up with several points. Among these points, Ottman et al. (2006) in his green marketing myopia research precisely rationalized the facts by posing a very general question- if I use green products, what’s in it for me?” through the question, he indicated that green products failed to attract mainstream consumer due to absence of consumer value position elements that creates ultimate consumer satisfaction. Due to excessive attention of green claims (toxic free ingredients, recyclable, biodegradable and strict certification) green marketing failed to balance the green value ingredients and ‘non green’ consumer value ingredients (Efficiency, cost effectiveness, convenience, performance, symbolism and status and health and safety) to attract and satisfy mainstream consumer. After a backlash in 90s, Green marketing again made an upswing from 2000 and onwards (Ottman et al. 2006; Lee
2008). Considering this opportunity, the project objective has been set to focus on the ‘consumer satisfaction’ as the enhancing factor of green marketing which was ignored in green period of 90s. Therefore, the research will be endeavored to erect the fact that—“it’s not solely green value ingredients rather the combination of green and ‘non-green’ value ingredients can enhance green marketing through complete customer satisfaction which fosters green sale and in return can contribute effectively to save this planet.” To investigate the research objective, organic food has chosen from vast varieties of green product as an effective means to examine that consumer satisfaction through the presence of fundamental consumer value ingredients can enhance the opportunity of green marketing. It is evidenced by numerous marketing expert that the consumer value ingredients which are set as variables for this research are the most deserved variables (Efficiency, cost effectiveness, convenience, performance, symbolism and status and health and safety) in any products to define the satisfaction level (Ottman et al. 2006). Therefore, it is apparent that the objective issue of green marketing can be effectively examined by the chosen organic food segment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Green Marketing emphasized ‘customer satisfaction’ with ‘Green’ characteristics

Since the celebrated commencement business houses restrict the definition and features of green marketing to the advertising or promotion of products with environmental characteristics. A greater part of business houses and people like to define green marketing as ‘biodegradable’, ‘toxic free ingredients’, ‘recyclable’, ‘refillable’, ‘Ozone friendly’ and some other related environment friendly concerns whereas these features are only few listed claims of green marketing (Polonsky 1994). In general green marketing is a much broader concept which incorporates a holistic management process that indentifies, anticipates and designs to generate and facilitates any exchanges with the intent to satisfy consumer needs and wants with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment (Rowell 1996; Peattie 1995; Polonsky 1994). If the above definition is critically analyzed then it can be found that the stated definition integrates typical characteristics of traditional marketing that secures all the position of organization, consumers and environment. Customer satisfaction gets here the equal and distinctive attention as the consumer needs must be satisfied by the marketing activities.

2.2 Previous Green Marketing Research Focused Scarcely on ‘Customer Satisfaction’ Aspect

Since its euphoric introduction, green marketing has been regarded an crucial issue of research material for at least last three decades (Kinneat et al. 1974; Coddington 1993; Meffert and Kirchgeorg 1993; Hopfenbeck 1993; Ottman 1994; Peattie 1995; Fuller 1999; Kalafatis et al. 1999; Calomarde 2000). In these three decades of research, most of the researchers frequently put their research attention mainly on the characteristics of the term “Green” rather than the term of “Green Marketing” (Hartmann et al. 2005). During 90s, when green marketing was terribly subsided by the consumers, the researchers became busy to sort out the reasons behind the fall (Wong et al. 1996; Peattie and Carne 2005; Schrum et al. 1995). Numbers of researchers came up with number of reasons but among those findings, researchers critically identified two basic reasons behind the waning of green market. One reason includes the opportunistic approach adopted by the organizations by adding false green claims with the existing products which fostered the consumer cynicism about the green claims. Second reason is regarding the product’s undelivered attributes or ingredients to make the consumer satisfied (Mendleson and Polonsky 1995; Peattie and Carne, 2005; Wong et al, 1996). However, the reason of ‘undelivered products attributes to satisfy consumers’ received an inadequate research attention from the researchers.

2.3 The ‘GAP’ between Survey Findings and Actual Consumer Behavior

From the initiation, numerous researches have been carried out in different parts of the world to measure different aspects of green marketing including environmental concern and consciousness, environmental attitudes and behavior, price premium claim of green marketing, and affinity with nature (Hartmann et al. 2005). Number of eminent survey findings at different times can be outlined as examples as follows (Ottman 1994):

- A study of 1992 survey of 16 country including USA and major European countries reveled that more than 50% of consumers are concerned about environment
- McKinsey and Company global survey in 2007 on 7751 consumers found that 87% of consumers are concerned about the environmental degradation
National Technology Readiness Survey in 2007 on 1025 US adults revealed around 70% participants wants do business with environmental responsible companies

The survey of Innerbridge in last part of 2008 found that more than 85% business are engaging themselves in some form of green marketing

According to findings of Cone Consumer Environmental Survey published in February, 2009, 44% respondents in USA indicated that their environmental shopping habits did not change due to massive strike of recession.

From the above green marketing survey example it can be seen the result of ‘greenness’ is overwhelming, more than 70% (average) of all survey respondents are very much environment concerned. Therefore, according to the finding green marketing should have boomed. But, Words and deeds failed to meet in a single point when it actually comes to consume green products. Researchers also indicate this planned and actual behavior is often contradictory (Hines et al. 1987; Stone et al. 1995; Kalafatis et al. 1999; Schlegelmilch et al. 1996). The gap between this word and deed can be exemplified by some following research findings:

2007 Chain Store Survey of 822 US consumers found that only 25 percent have bought green products excluding organic food and energy efficient lighting. The survey also revealed that 60% consumers lost their interest on earth friendly product such as carpets from recyclable fiber, energy saving computers and so on.

According to the Nutrition Business Journal in 2006, organic food only accounted less than 2% of all food sales around the world.

According to the report by J.D Power and Associates in USA, green household cleaners accounted less than 2% of sales, hybrid car made up also less than 2% sales in the industry.

Now the grave concern is “why the gap has been created?” Ropers ASW’s ‘Green Gauge Report’ 2002 study found some fiascos regarding green marketing. The survey revealed some top reasons for those consumers do not want go with green include inconvenience, lower performance, high cost and poor product features (Ottman et al. 2006). The same survey on 2000 Americans in 2007 revealed that fully 61% consumers indicated that green good performs worse than conventional products.

2.4 Organic Food is still Serving in Niche Market due to Absence of Fundamental Consumer Value Elements

Over the past three decades, the concern of environment consciousness coupled with quality of diet have reflected through the growing demand of ‘organic’ food which is perceived as food, cultivated without ‘pesticide, ‘chemical’, and ‘growth hormones’ and also grown as ‘natural’. In the world, the fastest growing areas of this food segment include Europe, Northern America, Australia and Japan with sales in excess of around 115 billion pound in 2000 (Boyle et al. 2000). Among the growing markets of organic food in the world, UK is the fastest escalating market with the increase of 30 percent sales annually (Mintel 2009). In spite of this growing concern, organic food still accounts for only 1-2% sale of the total food market of Europe, USA and Japan (Mintel 2009), and it is still restricted in the niche market.

Along with consumer interest, researchers provided their considerable attention in different aspect of organic food. Most importantly greater part of research attention concentrated to examine the consumer perception of green food to sort out the reasons including consumer attitude, reasons for purchase and non-purchase, green food ingredients, market/supply chain structure of food (Haccius 1996; Hamm and Michelsen 1996, Latacz-Lohmann and Foster 1997; Hutchins and Greenhalg 1997; Makatouni 1999; Roody et al. 1994; Grunert and Juhl 1995). In this considerable research scenario, it is evidenced that very few researches have been conducted to compare and contrast of ‘organic/green food’ and ‘non organic food’ to indentify ‘what are the missing value ingredients that can boost up the sales of organic/green food through complete customer satisfaction in competition with mainstream food (Soil Association 2000)? Compare and contrast of ‘organic/green food’ and ‘non organic food’ was done several times but the objective was different, mainly centered on debate regarding the claim of organic food ingredients (Hutchin and Greenhalg 1997).

According to the green claim of organic food, it is environment friendly because of its pesticide and harmful chemical free cultivation and production process. According to green marketing claim, this environment friendly behavior worked significantly to attract mainstream consumers along with green consumer to consume the food. But according to the findings of numerous researches, environment consciousness does not lie even in top three reasons behind the motivation to consume organic/ green food. Top three reasons include the health and nutrition
level of organic food but sincerely all the research findings agreed on the point that the feature of harmful chemical free and pesticide free cultivation and production system are working behind the rise of top three reasons (CMA 1999; Meier-Ploeger et al, 1996; Sylvander 1995; Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte 1992). Almost every survey revealed that mainstream consumes are not at all interested to pay high for consuming organic food except a small portion of green consumers (Soil association 2000). Lohmann and Foster (1997) clarified the reason behind the high price claim of organic food which includes underdeveloped market and supply structure and small amount of production due to small farming system. Lack of availability is another powerful and authentic charge against organic food (Soil association 2000; Mintel 2004; Makatouni 2002). From the descriptive discussion on the research findings, it is quite visible that the absence of ‘non-green’/fundamental consumer value ingredients like other green products plays a significant role to rationalize the small market share of organic food. Taking organic food as example, the research objective is endeavored to erect the truth that the combination of green and non–green consumer value ingredients is the core to create the complete customer satisfaction. Hamm and Michelsen (1996) in their journal ‘Organic agriculture in a market economy: Perspectives from Germany and Denmark’ clearly stated that organic food should leave its exotic image to increase the market share through satisfying consumer and it is possible to add-up food features from mainstream food.

3. Methodology

For this research work, questionnaire method was selected for primary data collection for its fast and easy to analyze characteristics. Using all possible social networks, 680 questionnaires were distributed in different places in London and Scotland. Supermarkets are prioritized for sample selection as supermarkets accumulate all sorts of items and people are used to visit there frequently to meet their daily needs. Supermarkets were the places during the green tide in 90s which first responded with this euphoric move (Jones 1991). Simple random sampling technique was used for sample selection. However, the survey did not include underage consumers (7-12 years age) who have very little knowledge about green marketing. Five points Likert scale has been selected as it is easy for the consumers to make choice and precise enough to analyze the data (Dahaher and Haddrell 1996). A descriptive analysis has been done to examine relationship and effects of variables which are presented in percentage, averages, tables and charts with the intent to establish the objective. Descriptive analysis is an uncomplicated analytical process to analyze the importance, agreement and satisfaction level (Danaher and Haddrell 1996).

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4. Findings: Primary data Analysis

4.1 Consumer Demographic Characteristics

This 680 questionnaire survey, mostly conducted in supermarkets has discovered a positive green consumption phenomenon like other previous surveys and researchers. Almost 89% consumers buy organic food but proportionately only 32% consumers are the green consumers who purchase food once in a month and rest big 68% purchase organic food on a rare occasion and some of them never buy organic. From the analysis, it has been revealed that young consumers (<45) are the big purchaser of organic (38% of all organic purchasing age group) food but their purchasing frequency has fall in rare occasion. Though old people (50+) are not the strong purchaser like young but their purchasing frequency is higher than young consumers. Women are more likely to consume organic food than male as they are more concerned about family health than male members. According to the survey, 37% women purchase organic food in a week or a month, on the other hand, this percentage is 28% in case of male. A significant positive relationship has been found between ‘high income groups’ and green consumption. According to the survey GBP 70,000+ (Great Britain Pound) income group is the highest purchaser of green food than any other income group. The same positive relationship has also been found in between ‘children under 18’ family group and green consumption.

4.2 How Important are the Selected ‘Non-Green’ (Fundamental Consumer Value Positioning Ingredients) Consumer Value Ingredients to the Consumers to Derive Satisfaction?

From the survey of 680 consumers, a strong positive relationship has been revealed between the selected ‘non-green’ variables and consumer satisfaction. It has revealed that consumers strongly demand above variables to make them satisfied when they purchase any food items. From the survey it has found that little above 80% consumers demand “health and safety” ingrained value elements as an important issue for deriving their satisfaction while purchasing any type of foods. Simultaneously, 71% consumers strongly give their importance to ‘efficiency and competitive price’ included value elements, 75% to “performance”, 69% to “convenience” and 74% to “symbolism and status” included value elements. On an average, according to the survey findings, 74% of all survey consumers strongly require ‘health & safety’, ‘convenience’, ‘performance’, ‘symbolism & status’ and ‘convenience’ ingrained value elements of food items to make them satisfied. To rest 25.63% consumers, the ingredients are somewhat important but not very important. If a critical eye can be put on this analytical findings, then it can be easily sorted out why mainstream consumers look for conventional goods? It is because mainstream consumers mostly looking for above value ingredients in a product during their purchase to make them satisfied.

4.3 Consumers’ Perception on ‘Organic food Quality over Conventional Food’ and ‘Overall Satisfaction of Organic Consumption’

Comparative quality aspect of organic value elements: In this regard, an agreement/disagreement statement has been asked to discover how consumers perceive the overall quality of organic food features over conventional food? Do they consider organic food features (green consumer value ingredients) are better than conventional food features (non-green consumer value ingredients)? From the survey, it has been revealed that 64% (round of 63.96%) of the overall surveyed consumers are disagreed to accept that the consumer value elements of organic food are better than conventional food. However, almost 20% are in middle condition of agreement and
disagreement and rest 16% (round of 16.35%) are agreed with the statement. If the findings are critically analyzed then it can said these 64% consumers are typical mainstream consumers, 16% consumers are green power consumers and in middle 20% consumer are mixture of green and mainstream consumers.

Satisfaction aspect: How satisfied are the consumers with overall food features (green value ingredients) of organic food? the analysis says that big portion of 61% consumers is dissatisfied with the overall food features of organic food and 19% are satisfied and rest portion is in doubt by putting their comment on ‘Not satisfied or dissatisfied’.

From the above two analysis, it has been mainly endeavored to sort out the answers of consumers’ reflection regarding value elements of organic food over conventional food elements and how much they are satisfied with these value elements of organic food. In both cases, the analysis found over 60% consumers is in against the motion with the stated concerns of organic food. The outcome of these analysis have raised the concern- what are then the main value elements are missing in organic food that are present in conventional food? Do the consumers demand both conventional value elements in organic food along with organic value elements to get them satisfied? These concerns are revealed in the following section.

4.4 The Combination of Green and Non-Green Value Ingredients in Organic Food- Consumers Reflection

To investigate this issue, an agreement scale statement has been posed to consumers for their reflection which states - “Along with organic value elements, organic food should contain all important food features of conventional food specifically competitive price (cost efficiency), superior taste & high nutrition combination (performance), enhanced flavor (performance), availability& variety of choices (convenience)”. The statement has got a tremendous positive reflection from the consumers. 88% consumers support the statement who says organic food should contain the aforementioned major value ingredients of conventional food. Not only that, it has found from further analysis that 87% consumers, who purchase organic food either frequently or rarely, demand this combination to get them satisfied and 91% consumers from ‘non-green consumer segment’ demand this combination who never purchased organic food.

4.5 The Issue of Price Premium- What Drives Consumer to Give Higher Price Premium for Organic Food

In the first part of price premium analysis, a statement has been asked to the consumer for their reflection which states- “I prefer to pay high price for organic food for all of its green food features but more likely for environment friendly agricultural system and pesticide, GM and hazardous additives free food features”. Only 26% consumers has been revealed from the survey who put their positive consent with the agreement and 57% consumers put their disagreement and rest 17% consumers remain in middle (Not agree or disagree). Now, from the findings it has become precise that consumers largely demand these green value ingredients but very few (26%) are ready to pay high price premium solely for these green value elements. Therefore, critically, it can be stated that extreme focus on these green value ingredients are the reasons for which consumers are not ready to count extra cost.

The another statement has been asked for consumers’ consideration which states- “I prefer to pay high price premium for organic food, if organic food, along with its organic characteristics contains all important food features of conventional food especially competitive price (cost efficiency), superior taste & nutrition value (performance), enhanced flavor (performance), availability& variety of choices (convenience)”. The statement has got an immense accord from the consumers. 79% consumers are ready to pay high price for organic food if organic food is available in the blending and balancing format of ‘green’ and ‘non-green’ value ingredients. From the above findings it is clear that extreme focus on green food features are no longer working as a strong point to claim extra cost for organic food rather the presence of fundamental value ingredients are the core to create consumer satisfaction and drive consumer strongly to pay high price premium for organic food.

To explain the price premium issue more precisely, a further analysis has been conducted which focus the quantitative aspects of price premium. This time, taking the above statement as base consumers are asked about how much price premium they ready to pay for above stated green consumer value elements of organic food and also combination of green and non-green consumer value ingredients in organic food. From the quantitative depiction, it has been found that highest 56% consumers are ready to pay 5-10% extra cost for organic food value ingredients. 16% consumers to pay 10-20%, 11% consumers 20-30%, 6% consumers 30-40% and rest 1% consumers are ready to pay 40-50% premium. On the other hand, the combination of green and fundamental
consumer value elements in organic food found 47% consumers, who are ready to bear 30-40% extra cost for the combination in organic food and 17% consumers ready to pay 40-50% price premium.

After analyzing the price premium issue in perspective of green and non-green consumer value ingredients, it has become apparent that the strength factors of green claims in organic food has been drawing attention of small green consumer not the mainstream consumers. Except the green consumers, mainstream consumers are not ready to count extra cost for organic food. Same time, it is also evidenced from the survey a big number of consumers regardless of green and mainstream consumers are ready to pay extra cost if they get the presence of fundamental consumer satisfying value elements in organic food along with organic characteristics.

6.0 Conclusion

In this globalized industrial era, consumers are gradually changing their habits and life styles. According to several studies, contemporary consumers characterize their food consumption style in two major trends: the need for convenience food and the need for healthier eating (Gofton and Ness 1991). Not only in food segment, consumer require convenience in every product segments as Peattie (1995) stated in his ‘Environmental Marketing Management’ book that consumers in industrialized society do need ‘convenience’ in every products for their daily survival due to increased equal male female labor participation, and increasing product price. In this scenario, consumers have very little time to think about the environment and due to this; consumers are mostly looking for short time product specific characteristics for their usage and consumption. Therefore, to save this planet any product either for usage or consumption must balance the actual and changing need of consumers with the time and the environmental issue to degrade pollution. Over or misjudging any of the side will create dissatisfaction among the consumers thus hampers the consumption process to save the planet (Ottman et al, 2006). In this perspective, green marketing is a euphoric invention of marketing but the concern is how it put forward its benefit to the consumers? Due to the misbalance of green and fundamental consumer value ingredients in green product, green marketing is still serving in a very tiny niche market and organic food is not out of this situation. Since it’s initiation in UK in 1930, it is still holding a 1-2% market share of overall food segment (Baker et al. 2002, Mintel, 2009). The reasons behind this small market share mostly suffering from the same ‘non-green’ basic value elements- high price (cost effectiveness), less variety, choice and availability (convenience), less tasty( performance), poor shape and color ( symbolism and status), less combination of nutrition ingredients to confer nutrition value ( health and safety) and so other related reasons. But, it is evidenced that when green marketing properly blend this green and non-green value ingredients then it has clinched sheer success. Baby organic food, Toyota Prius, Phillips CFL bulb, Tide Coldwater laundry, shade grown coffees, Chic- front-loading washing machine etc. are few examples which combine superbly both the green and non-green value ingredients to satisfy the actual need of consumers.

From this research work, it can be deduced that consumer define green marketing as a set of management process which effectively and efficiently combine the green value elements in a product to save the planet along with fundamental consumer value ingredients( termed non-green) to serve the actual need, want or interest. The elements of the above definition get clarified when consumers asked to rank the importance level of green and non-green value ingredients of food characteristics. Over 65% consumers require both the ingredients almost equally to get them satisfied.

The survey also clarifies the basic demand of consumers to make them satisfied from a product regardless of green and non-green. In the survey, 74% consumers strongly require indentified fundamental consumer value ingredients (non-green) to get them satisfied while they purchase any food products regardless of green and ‘non-green’. Again, a total of large 64% consumers agreed that the value elements of conventional food are better than organic food quality. Therefore, consumer basic demand from any product has become precise from the survey which confirms the fundamental value elements of ‘convenience’, ‘performance’, ‘health & Safety’, ‘symbolism and status’ and ‘efficiency and cost effectiveness’ are foremost requirements to make consumer satisfied from any product. Green food is not out of the scenario. This scenario gets clarified when the highest 88% consumers demand above fundamental value elements along green value elements in organic food to get them satisfied. Therefore, it is precise; consumers largely demand consumer satisfying fundamental value elements in green product.

From the survey, it has been found that only 26% consumers are ready to pay extra cost for organic food while at the same time 78% consumers ready to pay extra cost if organic food can assure the presence of non-green value ingredients along with green value ingredients. A major proportion of 56% consumers are ready to pay only 5-
10% price premium for organic food on the other hand only 0.5% consumers are ready to pay only 5-10% price premium for the combination of green and non-green value ingredients in organic food. From the analytical findings, it can be stated that organic food lacks significantly the fundamental consumer value elements that keeps away the mainstream consumers to consume it. Therefore, through assuring the presence of these missing value ingredients, organic food can attract mainstream consumers to consume green and simultaneously the proper combination of these value elements with green elements can enhance the market share of organic food and thus green marketing.

From the survey, it is evidenced that consumer won’t buy any product which failed to fulfill their need, want and interest. Therefore, green product must offer a benefit beyond just being green. The diversity and availability of green products must convince consumers about the desirable ‘non-green’ benefits of the product which influence and incline mainstream consumers to adopt and to use green product while they perceiving they are using non-green product. However, in this research, some limited non-green value ingredients of consumer satisfaction has been employed to examine the relationship. Therefore, future researches can be conducted by focusing elaborated non green value of elements of consumer satisfaction to examine the relationship.

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