

Green Packaging and Consumer Buying Behaviour

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Abstract

In the present scenario, consumers are becoming more and more conscious about the packaging of merchandise available in the market. The role of packaging has changed primarily due to the changing lifestyles and needs of the consumers. With the depletion of natural resources, packaging has become a major issue for consumers as well as for business houses. Companies have to face the challenge of designing efficient, cost-effective and attractive packaging. Even the consumers have realized that their purchasing behavior had a direct impact on the ecological issues. Therefore, in order to overcome these problems the concept of green packaging has emerged. It is a wide notion which focuses on sustainable development of a country. As far as the growth of green packaging is concerned the environmental protection and the effective utilization of resources plays a very important role. Therefore, the present study aims to uncover the various issues and challenges in green packaging.

Keywords: green packaging, consumers, challenges, environment, ecological issues.

Introduction:

With the impact of today's world environmental protection, green packaging design has become an unavoidable tendency in the packaging industry. Owing to the emergent awareness in the environmental issues among suppliers and their customers, green packaging has grown its importance. The number of studies have been conducted to examine the growing interest in the environmental and ethical issues in the consumer behavior and ethical awareness in general (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Webster, 1975; Uusitalo, 1990; Pieters, 1991; Berger and Corbin, 1992; Creyer and Ross, 1997; Shaw and Clarke, 1999; Shaw and Shiu, 2003; Thøgersen and Ölander, 2003; De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Shaw et al., 2005; Fraj and Martinez, 2007; Moisander, 2007). Consumers can solve the environmental problems by either recycling or selecting environment-friendly products (Uusitalo, 1986 and Thøgersen, 1999). There is also an increasing awareness in the general environmental sustainability in the companies. The companies are using more of the green packaging in order to market their products as well as to craft a good business image.

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Green or sustainable packaging refers to the packaging that can be recyclable or made of recycled materials. Green packaging was founded in 2007 by an environmental activist who was concerned about the increasing amount of petroleum based, non- degradable packaging materials that were being used around the world. The green packaging materials helps to reduce the dependence on foreign oil, reduce global warming and help reduce greenhouse gases. Green packaging is expected to increase 3.9 percent yearly to \$41.7 billion in 2014, consuming 58 billion pounds of material. Consequently, studies show that consumers have a high preference for green products, but the consistency between consumer attitudes and behavioural measures is rather low.

The business houses are becoming more loyal towards the environmental issues due to green legislation that escalate the people concern regarding the environment and economic influences (Landua, 2008). Therefore some of the business houses have implemented the green strategy. As consumers are critically reacting towards the environmental policies, a large number of companies are budding company-wide environmental programs and green products through green packaging (Min and Galle, 1997). Today the business houses have to compact with the diversity of issues surrounding its business and the most important of them is to foresee the changes which can take place in future and in view of that outline the marketing strategies. Subsequently, more of the studies show that consumers have a high preference for ethical or green products, but the consistency between the thoughts of the consumers and behavioural measures is somewhat low. Inconsistency has been found not only in between environmental attitudes and specific behaviours but also between specific environmental attitudes and related behavioural intentions (Uusitalo, 1989, 1990; Moisander and Uusitalo, 1995; Alwitt and Pitts, 1996; Bech-Larsen, 1996; Thøgersen, 1999; Moisander, 2007).

Traditionally, containment and protection was considered to be the prime function of the package. But in the recent years, packaging becomes the most significant part of the marketing policy (Peattie, 1995). Packaging has become key intermediate to recognize company's brand as well as it is the final opportunity with the the seller to persuade the buyer to pay for the product. Green packaging is a value-creating element which influences the purchasing decision of the buyer. Green packaging is intended to develop more environmentally friendly products and processes. The application of green packaging involves a particular framework for considering environmental issues, the application of relevant analysis and synthesis methods, and a challenge to traditional procedures for design and manufacturing. Therefore, green packaging strengthens the position of business on the market by fulfilling the needs of the increasing number of green customers and also helpful in building the customer relationship.

Green packaging, as an environmentally friendly innovation, contributes to environmental protection in multiple ways. Previous studies have shown that consumers generally prefer green packaging and are often willing to pay extra for it. Research has also demonstrated that purchase intentions toward eco-friendly packaging are strongly affected by factors such as personal values, attitudes, environmental awareness, and willingness to pay. Furthermore, consumer preferences for green packaging may differ depending on social influences.

Overall, green packaging plays an important role in shaping consumer attitudes and encouraging sustainable purchasing behaviour while also helping businesses improve their environmental image and competitiveness.

Review of literature

There are several studies which have been conducted to study the issues and challenges of green packag-

ing on consumer buying behaviour. Some of the reviews of these studies are as follows:

Schweper and Cornwell (1991) examined ecologically concerned consumers and their intention to purchase ecologically packaged products. It was found that consumers who are concerned about waste and who have favourable attitude towards ecologically conscious living are prone to purchase ecologically packaged goods. It was further indicated that locus of control, attitude towards pollution and attitude towards ecologically conscious living are also the useful indicators of ecologically concerned consumers. **Glantschnig (1994)** found that green packaging has been considered as a significant module in order to produce goods and services with a reduced lifetime environmental impact. **Laroche et al. (2001)** studied those consumers who are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products. Five factors i.e. Demographics, knowledge, values, attitude and behaviour has been identified that may influence the consumer willingness to pay for environmentally friendly products. Thus more and more companies should educate consumers about the convenience of buying ecologically safe products through proper advertisement and positive attitude. **Rokka and Uusitalo (2008)** analysed the importance of green packaging by comparing it with other product related attributes. The study was conducted on 330 consumers who consume functional drink products and conjoint analysis technique has been applied. It was found that environmentally products have positive impact on the buying decision of the consumers. Environmental packaging was strongly preferred product attribute when consumers choose among functional drinks products. Therefore, every consumer has different preference towards the brand, price and convenience of use as well as packaging. **Dangelico and Pujari (2010)** examined that green product innovation is considered to be one of the factors in achieving bulge, environmental sustainability and a better quality of life. A multiple case study analysis of 12 small to medium size manufacturing companies was carried out in Italy and Canada. Energy minimisation, materials reduction and pollution prevention are identified as three dimensions of green product innovation. **Mishra and Sharma (2010)** investigated that it is the liability of the marketers to make the consumers aware of the needs and benefits of green products as compared to non-green ones. It was found that the consumers are always enthusiastic to pay extra for green products in order to sustain a cleaner and greener environment. **Peattie (2010)** identified green consumer. It was found that green consumption of the consumers is sturdily inclined by their ethics, norms and lifestyle. **Azevedo et al. (2011)** investigated the association between green practices and supply chain performance. In terms of customer satisfaction and loyalty, a positive relationship has been seen among the green practice implementation and operational performance. Thus green practice has been identified as the widely used means to evaluate the supply chain performance. **Hao et al. (2019)** examined the impact of green packaging on buying behaviour of consumers. It was found that with the increasing importance of environmental protection and sustainable development, eco-friendly products become the trend of modern society. The study showed that although many consumers have limited knowledge about green packaging, they still display a relatively strong willingness to pay for it. **Wandosell et al. (2021)** studied the impact of green packaging from consumer and business point of view. The study covered major issues like design and materials, packaging costs, marketing strategies and corporate social responsibility linked with green packaging. They also studied the role of green packaging in waste management, the circular economy, logistics, and supply chain management.

Why packaging goes green

Green packaging could be seen not only as a means to catch the attention of the consumers, but also as a

medium to hold on to the old ones also. The most common green concerns in the business of packaging includes high level of energy consumption, use of non-recyclable packaging material and usage of natural resources which leads to profligate use of resources and redundant waste and rubbish. (Peattie, 2005).

The consumers are becoming more and more conscious about the environment and are also becoming socially responsible. Therefore companies have the responsibility to look after the consumer's aspirations for environmentally damaging products. The designers are under pressure to improve the packaging of their products in context to environmental impact. While designing the product there are many advantages to the business in taking the green approach. When the package gets smaller the cost of shipping and packaging also goes down.

For example the cost of shipping can be reduced as a decrease in package size means more products can be shipped than before. Some of the benefits of green packaging are as follows:

1. It helps the companies to market their products and services keeping the environment aspects in mind. It helps them in accessing new markets and enjoying the competitive advantage.
2. The businesses can reduce their utility costs by using technologies that are energy efficient and leads to less wastage.
3. Green packaging ensures sustained long-term growth along with profitability of the consumers
4. Recycling paper and using longer lasting products reduces the amount of energy needed to replace the products.
5. Green packaging helps in generating positive public image. It would be helpful in earning the attention of prospective customers and also generates the possibility of new sales.
6. Going green is an easier with the assistance of state and federal governments, local municipalities and water districts that offer tax incentives and rebates.
7. Green packaging is helpful in increasing business opportunities. Some government agencies, commercial businesses and non profit organisations made it compulsory that only those organisations that meet the green standards can propose their contracts.

Scope of green packaging:

The power of a good package is recognised by the business houses in order to create a stable recognition on the market. Simultaneously, an increasing number of businesses have the tendency of green in order to persuade the consumer purchasing decision when providing an eco-value to the consumer. Green packaging is the most perceptible element of the green policy. Therefore, green packaging can be regarded as an effective marketing tool. Green packaging can be measured not only as a means of attaining a competitive advantage and fulfilling the customer desires, but also acts as a tool that helps in reducing the production expenses. For example recycling may lead to outstanding reserves of raw materials and energy, though successful packaging reduction can considerably reduce total costs. Green packaging is the most important element of the green strategy which can be explained as follows:

1. **Removal strategy-** The removal strategy helps in removing all avoidable layers from the package and also minimizes the extra wastage from the product.
2. **Recycling strategy-** The recycling strategy is used to recycle the waste that is formed during production process.
3. **Reduction strategy-**The reduction strategy helps to reduce the resources that are used in packaging material, refilled the packages, and abridged width of the package, switched to more environmentally

friendly stuff and also helps in improving the resource efficiency of packaging process.

4. **Reuse strategy**- The reuse strategy of packaging helps to offer reusable containers such as glass bottles, containers with refilling function as well as sturdy reusable shopping bags and many more.
5. **Biodegradability strategy**-The biodegradability strategy is helpful in using biodegradable materials, including biodegradable plastic
6. **Technology developments strategy**- The technology development strategy allows modifications in the eco-performance of product.
7. **Re- explore strategy**-The re-explore strategy helps the marketers to develop packaging using materials like cotton, jute, linen or recycled paper and plastic.
8. **Review strategy**-The review strategy is used when rigid production processes inspect, monitor and control waste in package manufacturing.

Issues and challenges of green packaging:

1. **Insufficiency of environmentally sound material and process choice:** It was usually seen that due to the lack of environmentally sound material the designers often hindered to improve the greenness of the product because of the combination of environmental perspective with the physical properties.
2. **Lack of ability to recognize environmental attributes:** Lack of ability is found in some businesses to identify that environmental attributes should be integrated with the desired consumer value which may lead to product failures. The companies are more prone towards the importance of integrating environmental product attributes, such as quality and pricing.
3. **Reliance of green packaging solution on external factors:** Another challenge faced by designers is the reliance of green packaging solutions on external factors. Since designers have power only on the front end of the product life cycle, their capability to reduce back-end environmental impacts is limited. Designers played an important role in crafting the product for the purpose of recycling. The accurate design solution depends on external factors but due to incomplete knowledge about the methods and technical capabilities of the competence, certain assumptions are required to be made.
4. **Lack of awareness among customers:** Another challenge among the business houses is a lack of awareness by customers for green product attributes. Sometimes consumer's awareness can be stimulated by means of eco- labels, which make green products clearly recognizable for customers.
5. **Majority of consumers are not willing to pay for green products:** The next challenge is that the majority of consumers are not willing to pay a premium price for green products. Even though the consumers are very conscious about the green packaging they are not keen to pay for those products. Thus it's a big challenge for the marketers to produce the products at an affordable price.
6. **Lack of practical environmental impact assessment methods:** The environmental impact assessment methods are needed to reduce the impact of industrial activities. The designers have the ability to make the best design choice in order to impact the assessment.
7. **Requirement of Technology:** Green packaging involves packaging of green products, green technology, green power for which a lot of money has to be spent on research and development programmers for their development, which is a costly process.

Implications:

The green packaging design starts with the contemplation of packaging functions. It also includes produ-

ct needs and distribution system requirements. The basis of packaging materials is one of the special concerns for the marketers. The principles of green packaging design include maintaining required functionality, minimizing the amount of material used, using recycled content and recyclable materials. The designers have to face challenges in order to sustain in future market. Insufficiency of the environmentally sound material and process, lack of awareness among consumers, requirement of green technology are some of the major challenges which designers have to tackle. Recycling, reusability, biodegradability, re-explore are some of the strategies that are being followed by the designers to sustain in the market. Thus green Packaging should be promoted in order to create a healthy and environmentally friendly surrounding.

Conclusion:

The consumers have realized that their purchasing behavior directly or indirectly have an impact on many ecological problems. Because of the diminution of natural resources packaging has become a major concern for consumers, environmentalists and designers. Therefore, the business organizations are suggested to follow some strategies in order to get benefits from the green packaging of the products. Marketers should discover the customers, their environmental needs and should develop the packaging of the products that is related to their issues and produce more and more of green packaging products by using strategies like recycle, reuse, re- explore and biodegradable in order to meet the expectations of consumers.

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