

Green Marketing and Its Impact on Consumer Buying Behavior

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Abstract

This study aims to give information about the effect of green marketing on customers purchasing behaviors. First of all, environment and environmental problems, one of the reason why the green marketing emerged, are mentioned, and then the concepts of green marketing and green consumer are explained. Then together with the hypothesis developed literature review has been continued and studies conducted on this subject until now were mentioned. In the last section, moreover, questionnaire results conducted on 540 consumers in Istanbul are evaluated statistically. According to the results of the analysis, environmental awareness, green product features, green promotion activities and green price affect green purchasing behaviors of the consumers in positive way. Demographic characteristics have moderate affect on model.

Keywords: *Green Marketing, Environmental Awareness, Green Product Features, Green Promotion, Green Price, Green Purchasing Behavior.*

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Introduction

While globalization process continues in its full speed across the world, this process has also brought some problems with it. Leading one of these problems is environmental problems that affect all living beings negatively. These aforementioned environmental problems have started to come to the agenda more and more in the recent years and people have started to talk these negativities. Consumers now have worries about the future of the world and as results of this mostly prefer environment-friendly products. In return to these attitudes of the consumers, companies have started to form their marketing strategies so as to appeal increasing awareness of this environment-friendliness. These marketing strategies, named as green marketing, have caused companies to adopt green policies in their pricing, promotion, product features and distribution activities.

Taking into consideration that companies are socio-economic entities, it can't be expected that they remain unresponsive to the "Environmental Awareness" that may direct consumer behaviors. Particularly marketing managers encounter with consumers sensible to environmental issues. The old perception on how businesses are establishments with no other objective but to profit leaves its place rapidly to a new perception which defines companies as establishments that are sensible to social problems. Apart from producing environment-friendly products and selecting environment-friendly markets, essentially understanding of 'Environmentally Friendly' is required to be integrated into the corporate culture. Consumers encounter with terms such as ozone-friendly, environment-friendly and recyclable products in green marketing. However, green marketing isn't limited to these terms but is a much wider concept of marketing activity which can be applied to consumer goods, industrial goods and even to services (Erbaşlar, 2010).

Green marketing term was first discussed in a seminar on "ecological marketing" organized by American Marketing Association (AMA) in 1975 and took its place in the literature. In this seminar where the impact of marketing on natural environment was analyzed with the contribution of academicians, bureaucrats and other participants, ecological marketing concept was defined as follows: Studies regarding adverse or positive impacts on environmental pollution, energy consumption and consumption of other resources as result of marketing (Cevreorman, 2010).

Green marketing serves two purposes: (Uydacı, 2002: 85)

In order to develop goods that can appeal to the consumer, reasonably affordable prices and environment-friendly products causing minimal damage are required.

In order to reflect an image of high quality, environmental sensitivity and hence production of products compatible with environment are required.

Businesses and Green Marketing

There are serious changes for awakening in the business world regarding the responsibility towards the environment and the society. Strategies targeting not only making a profit for the day but also for long-term profitability and environmentally friendly sustainability have started to become agendas of the companies. Corporate ethical code of the 21st century is being green. The ideology of “always me, always me” of profit-making companies has no longer any effect. Of course, the primary objective of companies is profitability but it is too hard for companies with the sole objective of making profit to obtain sustainability. Companies should be aware of their responsibilities towards the environment and the society in the same way as towards clients, shareholders and employees. Climate change, environmental issues and social problems will challenge the leaders of future generation for taking efficient and comprehensive decisions. In the process of taking these decisions, the priority of business people should be based on the principal of protecting the environment rather than profitability of the business. The opinion of Rakesh Khurana and Nitin Nohria, professors of business administration at Harvard, is such that priority should take its place in the professional literature with an oath similar to the Hippocratic Oath. The concept of creative capitalism defined by Bill Gates underlines that the leaders of future generations are responsible not only for obtaining desired results but also for the impacts of their decisions on elements other than their own companies and markets (Businews, 2010).

Green Consumer

The green consumer is generally defined as one who adopts environmentally-friendly behaviors and/or who purchases green products over the standard alternatives. Green consumers are more internally-controlled as they believe that an individual consumer can be effective in environmental protection. Thus, they feel that the job of environmental protection should not be left to the government, business, environmentalists and scientists only; they as consumers can also play a part. They are also less dogmatic and more open-minded or tolerant toward new products and

ideas. Their open-mindedness helps them to accept green products and behaviors, more readily (Shamdasani et al. 1993:491).

According to the consumption report of the EU (Consumers in Europe), it is found that ten percent of the consumers recognize the ecological product labels or green energy labels on the products sold in the supermarkets. Although the companies in our country progress with significant speed in terms of the environment, it is not possible yet for us to say that they have reached the same level regarding consumer sensitivity. In Western implementations, environmental awareness and the “green policy” in business organizations are reflected in the business as result of the environmental awareness of the consumers. The most recent and classical example regarding this subject is airline transportation industry. In airline transportation, large amount of carbon emission released by the planes into the environment is a matter in question. British Airway offers the following “relieving” solution to people who have to travel by plane but feel disturbed due to the carbon emission: to give financial support to a fund providing researches intended to reduce carbon emission. The carbon emission, released during the distance covered is calculated and a contribution of 12.08 Euro per ton can be paid per person. Carbon dioxide emission per one passenger during an Istanbul-London flight reaches 29 kilograms, and with this fund, which was established on a voluntary basis, environmentally conscious passengers can donate 3.25 Euro and feel relaxed. On the other hand, Turkish Airlines has stated “we achieved fuel savings and this saving reduced carbon emission” in a statement they made in October, demonstrating that the firm has a more low profile “temporary” approach (Naturalhaber, 2010).

Hypothesis Development

In recent times, with the increase in industrialization and urbanization, the usage of resources in spite of their shortages has confronted the natural environment and human health with a pollution at dangerous levels. This result has put the operations of implementing environmentally friendly products or applications to the top among the problems of marketing managers in developed countries, which they will encounter and need to solve. Businesses, which understood the fact that an awareness of protecting the environment, known as the green movement is highly supported by developed societies, also adopted this environmental movement and started to implement programs with the minimum potential to harm the natural environment.

Making an environmentally friendly product is not enough by itself for a sustainable world. Environmental awareness is also needed in matters regarding

consuming. Consumers also have important tasks in this matter as well as the people managing the marketing operations of the businesses. Consumers have started to support the environment by using their purchasing power and with their post consuming responsibilities. The trend to use environmentally friendly products containing materials which are not harmful to environment and human health (i.e. green products) has become popular among consumers thanks to this environmental awareness. Within this context, the people who aim to protect themselves and the environment with their purchasing power are identified as "green consumers".

The research literature is examined in the historical process at the level of environmental awareness of consumers is increasing. However consumers evoke their environmental interest with environmentally friendly consumer behavior. A study carried out between 1989-1990 supports these ideas with an increase in the number of consumers who expressed interest in the environment and a climb in the number of environmentally friendly products purchased. However some studies in the early 1990s do not fully support these claims. For example, in 1991, according to the Simmons market research bureau's (SMRB) study, there is low correlation between consumer's environmental concern and the willingness to purchase environmentally friendly products. Kleiner (1991), Schlossberg (1991) and Winski (1991)' s found in their studies a weak relationship between a consumer's positive attitudes to environmental issues and the actual buying behavior. By the end of the 1990s, despite environment related research in marketing literature, in practice it had not reached the desired result (Naturelhaber, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to discuss the effects of environmental awareness, green product features, green product prices, green product advertisements and consumers' demographic characters on the purchasing behavior of consumers and to determine if there is a significant relationship between them and the direction and level of this relationship, if any.

Environmental Awareness and Purchasing Green Product

A consumer with environmental awareness can be defined as "an ecologist who had grasped his/her self-efficacy against environmental pollution and how has a sense of responsibility with respect to future generations and the whole humanity in his/her use of resources. Conscious consumers with environmental awareness can assess the presence of environmental resources, their cost of use as well as the impact of this use to the environment and to themselves (Babaoğul and Ozgun, 2008).

Aslan, conducted a survey on 400 university students at Kafkas University. According to this study, students are aware of green purchase and use of products that are harmful to the environment. Features of the purchased product, superfluous packaging or wrapping, how waste abate after using, even after the purchase that information about purchased product are important for student (Aslan, 2007).

Aracıoğlu conducted a survey study with 360 questionnaires in İzmir. According to this study, when environmental pollution and awareness of environmental protection increase, they affect consumer buying behavior. Also participants were aware of the importance of recycling for protecting the environment and the prevention of environmental pollution (Aracıoğlu and Tatlıdil, 2009: 435-461).

H1 : There is a significant and positive relationship between environmental awareness and purchasing behavior of green product.

Green Product and Purchasing Green Product

Environmental pollution increasing rapidly throughout the industrialization period leading to a great reaction was born against products hazardous to the environment. When the hazardous contents of a product became one of the factors influencing the purchase decisions of consumers, businesses started to manufacture environmentally friendly or in other words green products and to create green product policies (Uydacı, 2002: 113).

Grail Research conducted a survey on 520 US Green consumer in June 2009. Target individuals include respondents between the ages of 18- 65 years old, who are aware of green products and who have purchased green products in the past. According to this study, Consumers think of green products as those that minimize the impact on the environment (e.g., energy-efficient, recyclable, natural or organic). Only 30% of consumers consider reducing water usage to be a green practice. Product labels and word of mouth are the primary sources of information about green products and companies for consumers (Grailresearch, 2010).

H2: There is a significant and positive relationship between Green Product Features and purchasing behavior of green product.

Green Price and Purchasing Green Product

A lower price caused by cost saving will encourage consumers to buy environmentally friendly products. When the demand for a product is price

responsive, a lower price will be a more successful strategy for the company. When the price is held at the same level, positive properties of the product about the environment can be used as a competitive advantage element. In case the price of the product is higher, importance should be given to promotion of differentiated green product and also there should be consumers ready to overpay for the product. In this case, important thing is level of price (Emgin and Turk, 2004).

Grail Research conducted a survey on 520 US Green consumer in June 2009. According to this study, consumers who never bought green products are deterred from purchasing them because they are perceived to be too expensive. Price is the main reason consumers choose not to buy green products (Grailresearch, 2010).

H3: There is a negative relationship between Green Price and purchasing behavior of green product.

Green Promotion and Purchasing Green Product

A good presentation provides the opportunity for the consumer to get together with businesses showing environmental responsibility. The presentation policy aims to create an “environmentally friendly business firm” image in the eye of the consumer and give environmental messages to consumers about the product. To achieve this goal, advertising campaigns, promotion, public relations and other marketing tools are adopted. This requires both internal and external communication (Uydacı, 2002: 128).

Shrum and others (1993) conducted a study on 3690 people. According to this study women, both green buying variables are associated positively with the belief that advertising is insulting and the tendency to switch channels during advertising, suggesting that women who tend to buy green are more skeptical of advertising than women who do not. In contrast men's skepticism toward advertising appears to be unrelated to their green buying behavior (Shrum et al. 1995: 71).

H4: There is a significant and positive relationship between Green Promotion and purchasing behavior of green product.

Demographics and Purchasing Green Product

A number of past studies have analyzed relationship between demographic variables and attitudes/ consumptions of ecologically awareness consumers. Such variables, if significant in terms of statistics, offer easy and efficient ways for to segment

the market and capitalize on green attitudes and behaviors for marketers. Roberts, conducted a survey on 235 students in a big university in order to determine green consumer behaviors in the new century. As result of this study, psychographics appear to be more effective than demographics in explaining variation in college students' ecological awareness consumer behavior. A person's belief that individuals can play an important role in fighting against environmental destruction is likely to be the driving force behind ecologically awareness consumer behavior. This relationship was held across samples of adult consumers and with college students in the present study, suggesting a stable green consumer profile. Although liberalism was found to be a significant correlate of ecologically awareness consumer behavior, it appears that this type of behavior transcends ideological boundaries. Altruism was also found to play a role, albeit a secondary one, in explaining ecologically awareness consumer behavior (Straughan and James, 1999: 559-575).

Diamantolopoulos and others (2003) conducted a study on 1697 questionnaires in Britain. According to this study, demographic variables were found insufficient to determine green consumer profile. However, again according to this study women are more related to the environment and women display pro environmental behaviors. Married couples are more likely to have pro environmental behavior. There is a negative correlation between age and pro environment attitude. There is a positive correlation between education, information and attitudes and behavior. However, in high social class, environmental information and environmental quality, and participating in green activities hypotheses were not supported (Keleş, 2007).

Tilikidou ve Delistavrou (2001) conducted a survey in Greece with 420 household. As a result of this study, it is concluded that citizens who more frequently adopt pro-environmental non-purchasing behaviors are all highly educated people. These citizens are not many, neither strongly engaged in most of these behaviors. The non-purchasing ecological behaviors are all positively correlated to recycling attitudes and locus of control. Recycling behavior is better predicted by recycling attitudes, while post-purchasing behavior and ecological activities are better predicted by the other behaviors. Consumers who are mostly involved in recycling and non-energetic, rather traditional activities are mostly influenced by their positive attitudes towards recycling as well as by their social responsibility. It was also found that those who were engaged in one type of the non-purchasing pro-environmental behavior were more likely to engage in another type as well (Tilikidou and Antonia, 2008: 61-76).

H5: Age has a moderator affect on model.

H6: Gender has a moderator affect on model.

H7: Marital status has a moderator affect on model.

H8: Education has a moderator affect on model.

H9: Income has a moderator affect on model.

Finding and Analysis

Demographics

Demographical Properties of the Consumers Participating in the Research

Factors		N	%
Gender	Female	270	50
	Male	270	50
Marital Status	Unmarried	266	49,3
	Married	153	28,3
	Married and have children	121	22,4
Age	16-35 age	374	69,3
	36-45 age	116	21,5
	46 years old or over	50	9,3
Education	Elementary school	128	23,7
	High school	196	36,3
	Bachelor and graduate students	216	40
Income	0-1000	174	32,2
	1001-2000	220	40,7
	2001 and over	146	27

Impact of Green Marketing on Green Purchasing Behavior

Relationship between Green Marketing and Purchasing Behavior of the Consumers

Factors		Green Purchasing Behavior
Green Awareness	R	0,235
	P	0,000
	N	540
Green Price	R	0,270
	P	0,000
	N	540
Green Product Features	R	0,328
	P	0,000
	N	540
Green Promotion	R	0,322
	P	0,000
	N	540

As result of correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between;

Environment awareness and green purchasing behavior, a positive significant relation was found. ($r=0,235$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

Green price and green purchasing behavior, a positive significant relation was found. ($r=0,270$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

Green product features and green purchasing behavior, a positive significant relation was found. ($r=0,328$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

Green promotion and green purchasing behavior, a positive significant relation was found. ($r=0,322$; $p=0,000<0,05$). According to this, as environment awareness, green promotion, green price, green product features increases green purchasing behavior increases as well.

In this respect, H1, H2 and H4 hypothesis were accepted. H3 Hypothesis was not accepted.

Impact of Gender on Purchasing Behavior

Regression model conducted in order to test exposure level of green purchasing behavior from green marketing for;

Female consumer was statistically significant ($F=12,220$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

Male consumer was statistically significant ($F=19,715$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

In this respect, while green promotion, environment awareness, green price, green product features affect green purchasing for male consumers, for female consumers only green promotion affect purchasing behavior. H5 hypothesis was accepted. Gender has a moderator effect on model.

Impact of Marital Status on Purchasing Behavior

Regression model conducted in order to test exposure level of green purchasing behavior from green marketing for;

Unmarried consumer was statistically significant ($F=13,267$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

Married consumer was statistically significant ($F=8,330$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

Married and having children consumer was statistically significant ($F=6,179$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

In this respect, while only green promotion affect green purchasing for unmarried consumers and only green price affects green purchasing for married consumers, for married costumers having children, only green product features affect green purchasing. H6 hypothesis was accepted. Marital status has a moderator effect on model.

Impact of Age of Purchasing Behavior

Regression model conducted in order to test exposure level of green purchasing behavior from green marketing for;

Consumers on 16-35 age group was statistically significant ($F=18,613$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

Consumers on 36-45 age group was statistically significant ($F=10,268$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

Consumers on 46 years old or over age group was not statistically significant. ($F=1,961$; $p=0,117>0,05$).

In this respect, while environment awareness, green product features and green promotion affect green purchasing for consumers in 16-35 age group and green price and green promotion affect green purchasing for consumer in 36-45 age group, for consumer that are 46 years old or over, only green promotion affect green

purchasing. H7 hypothesis was accepted. Age has a moderator effect on model.

Impact of Education on Purchasing Behavior

Regression model conducted in order to test exposure level of green purchasing behavior from green marketing for;

Elementary School Graduate consumers was statistically significant ($F=5,295$; $p=0,001<0,05$).

High School Graduate consumers was statistically significant ($F=7,376$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

Undergraduate and graduate school graduate consumers was statistically significant ($F=20,134$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

In this respect, while only green promotion affects green purchasing for elementary school graduates, for high school graduates green price and green product features affect green purchasing, and environment awareness, green product features and green promotion affect green purchasing for undergraduate and graduate school graduate consumers. H8 hypothesis was accepted. Education level has a moderator effect on model.

Impact of Income Level on Purchasing Behavior

Regression model conducted in order to test exposure level of green purchasing behavior from green marketing for;

Consumers having Income between 0-1000 tl was statistically significant ($F=4,134$; $p=0,003<0,05$).

Consumers having Income between 1001-2000 tl was statistically significant ($F=13,900$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

Consumers having Income 2001 and more was statistically significant ($F=14,644$; $p=0,000<0,05$).

In this respect, while only green promotion affect green purchasing for consumers having income level between 0-1000 TL, environment awareness and green price affect green purchasing for consumers having income level between 1001-2000 TL and for consumers having income of 2001 TL and more, environment awareness and green promotion affect green purchasing. H9 hypothesis was accepted. Income level has a moderator effect on model.

Conclusion

With industrialization and development and progress of technology, diversification in human needs has increased. As result of increase in diversification in the needs, our world has faced with the devastation and pollution of its natural resources. As result of use of natural sources, environmental devastation and pollution affect human life negatively. Humans have been in the search for ensuring their futures and sustaining their life in appropriate conditions. Consumers, by not remaining insensitive to environmental problems such as environment pollution and global warming, they have started to consider whether the products they purchase is environment-friendly or not apart from price and quality features of the products. With environment and environmental problems gaining importance for people, companies have started to change their production, goods or service generation, and hence marketing strategies accordingly. They have started to produce environment-friendly products and have tried to reach `Green Marketing` concept to the consumers.

The aim of this study, by analyzing the impact of environmental awareness, green product features, green product prices, green product advertisement and demographical features of consumers on purchasing behaviors of consumers, is to determine whether there is a significant relationship between them and if there is, to reveal direction and level of this relationship and hence to give advices to companies producing environment-friendly products.

As result of the study, as environment consciousness, green product features, green promotion and green price increase, green purchasing behavior increases as well. In most of the studies conducted until today, a negative relation between green price and purchasing behavior has been observed. Nevertheless, the result of our study shows that people are now willing to pay more for environment-friendly product against environmental pollution that threatens our world together with developing technology and industrialization.

When demographic properties of consumers are examined, while green promotion, environment awareness, green price, green product features affect green purchasing for male consumers, for female consumers only green promotion affect this. And this result shows us that companies should taken gender into consideration in their green marketing strategies. In environment- friendly product advertisements broadcasted within the day oriented to women, apart from stating price, features and environment-friendly aspect of the products, directly promotion

studies that shall make the advertisement charming may be carried out. In advertisement broadcasted in male oriented programs or in environment-friendly services oriented, product features, its price or its environment-friendly aspect can be stressed. Strategies may be also implemented in the products oriented to men or women in light of these results.

In the study conducted on marital status, while only green promotion affects green purchasing for unmarried consumers, only green price affects green purchasing for married consumers; and for married and having children consumers, only green product features affects green purchasing. According to this result, unmarried consumers are affected only from promotion and hence weight should be given to promotion activities in environment-friendly products oriented to unmarried consumers and in advertisements, instead of its price, feature and environment- friendliness it should be made to make the advertisement charming. On the other hand, in products manufactured for married consumers, importance should be given on the price of the product, in the advertisements price should be stressed (appliances, furniture etc.). As married and having children consumers are more sensitive about product features, promotions activities that bring this to the forefront should be carried out. The fact that consumers having children compared to unmarried or married and having children consumers only gives attention to product features shows us that if environment-friendly product service is especially oriented to children, product features should be on the forefront. (such as it does not harm health and that it is useful etc.) and companies should act sensitively on this subject.

In the study conducted on age, while environment awareness, green product features and green promotion affect green purchasing for consumers in 16-35 age group and green price and green promotion affect green purchasing for consumer in 36-45 age group, for consumer that are 46 years old or over, only green promotion affect green purchasing. 16-35 age group pays attention to all aspects expect price while purchasing a green product. In green marketing strategies oriented to this age group consumers, environment-friendliness and features of the product without stressing its price can be mentioned in the advertisements. For 36-45 age group, on the other hand, price properties should be stressed. Consumers of 46 years and more age group are affected only from the promotion. This group mosly is composed of people with high retirement rate whether be it female or male. Hence, TV advertisements may be prioritized.

In the study conducted on education, while only green promotion affects

green purchasing for elementary school graduates, for high school graduates green price and green product features affect green purchasing, and environment awareness, green product features and green promotion affect green purchasing for undergraduate and graduate school graduate consumers. According to these results, environment consciousness are higher in the group with high educational level unlike other groups. Enterprises plan and implement their activities in line with demand and needs of individuals. Consumers in this group demonstrating their demands and their purchasing as result of their environment conscious will allow environmental gains increase gradually. Moreover, due to this environment consciousness that educated group has, seminars and conferences may be organized on these subjects. As this group is also affected from promotion, billboard advertisements may be given inside campuses.

In the study conducted on income, while only green promotion affect green purchasing for consumers having income level between 0-1000 TL, environment awareness and green price affect green purchasing for consumers having income level between 1001-2000 TL and for consumers having income of 2001 TL and more, environment awareness and green promotion affect green purchasing. This result shows that consumers having low income level are not affected from price as thought, they are affected from promotion activities. Middle income group, on the other hand, are more conscious on environment and is a group that also considers the price. for the group with income level of 2001 TL and more, on the other hand, promotion and environment awareness is significantly important and hence in environment-friendly products in which high price is required, environmental aspect of the product should be mentioned more. Due to the fact that consumers with low income level are only affected from green promotion, enterprises should concentrate on promotion activities for the products that they will produce oriented to this group, and they should also take some actions in terms of public relations apart from TV advertisement. (For instance, as a certain percentage of products with low prices that low income group consumers can buy is used for nature protection purposes).

As shown also in the results, for today's consumer, price difference in environment-friendly products has disappeared to be a negative factor now and promotion has become important for consumers. When companies take these into consideration and determine marketing strategies accordingly, they can reach their goals by considering needs and demands of the consumers and by responding them in the most appropriate way. Therefore, tendency to environmental-friendly product shall exhibit gradual increase. Marketing managers should pay also attention

to demographic features in separation of consumers in the target mass to the segments. It is required that consumers have environmental awareness in the name of protecting the environment by non-governmental organization, governments, companies and individuals. Moreover, companies should especially pay attention to promotion activities and should increase their activities in this direction and should develop their contents. Promotion, price and product features should be directed as of demographic properties.

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