

Green Advertising- An Innovative and Sustainable Mantra for Growth

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Abstract

Environmentalism is the new trend in the current times. Recently, the Green Movement has driven the attention of one and all. The Green movement has provided marketers a customer- centric approach to induce them to buy their products. Green marketing has made its way into advertising and the consumer marketplace, through which the marketers are attempting to scale up sales. Green, environmental and eco-marketing are part of the new advertising approaches which do not just enhance existing advertising but gives an altogether different perspective of the characteristics of the product. It focuses on the allied advantages of the product in terms of its impact on environment. Green advertising is the advertising of products that are environmentally safe and hence they are preferred over other products. However, it is very important to know the impact of the Green advertising and various factors propagated in the advertisements that influence customers buying decision. This paper attempts to evaluate awareness level about the concept of Green advertising and find out the perception of people towards Green advertising. It also makes us understand the various factors that influence the minds of the customers. The present study is based upon the primary data collected from the customers in the city of Ulhasnagar through questionnaire. The findings aim at examining factors encouraging the use of green products, based on green advertisements made by the companies.

Keywords: Green Advertising, environmental –safe, customer –centric approach, Consumers

1. Introduction

Marketing is a very complex yet creative process. Consumerism is on the rise. The growing importance of consumers due to proliferation of various new products in the market, information explosion and rising concern about environment has compelled marketers to explore innovative and sustainable channels of communication. Over the past couple of decades, the green issue has resurfaced, and the Green movement has become more and more evident in our society. Companies have realized the impact of their activities on the environment and in turn upon the society at large. Environmental concern has become a strategic weapon for the Companies to sustain in the today's competitive world. Advertising has three functions, to inform, remind and persuade, Green Advertising is a process by which a company promotes its product by highlighting its green features, thereby validating its environmental preference and acceptance. The success of every advertising depends upon the USP (Unique Selling Proposition) of the product highlighted. "Green Claims", nowadays have started grabbing attention of the consumers as they advocate the importance of green products for environmental safety, health, etc. and at the same time, they also claim its importance for the growth and long term sustainability of such products in the market. The aim of green advertising is to create awareness and build favourable attitude towards the brands promoting the cause. The emergence of green challenge has brought about changes in consumers buying behaviour making it highly debatable topic. Consumers prefer those products which are eco-friendly and help to make environment "clean" and "green" for the sustainable development. The buying decisions of the consumers today are strongly influenced by the attitudes which are formed through advertisements. Green advertising or Green communication is the key to survival of the business, and it is also emerging as a successful attempt to retain the customers for long period of time. Various Companies like FabIndia, Mc Donalds, Ikea, Hershey and many others have adopted this strategy of green advertising to capture the minds of consumers by changing its packaging system of products. Mc Donalds replaced its packaging with waxed paper packaging thereby advocating green cause.

Companies like Johnson and Johnson has also set up a separate Sustainability department and aim at reducing carbon footprints by 20% by 2020 and have been actively involved in recycling of their products. They also run their own blog wherein they share the stories and articles relating to environmental preservation and sustainability. Thus, Green Advertising is promoting your product and at the same time exhibiting your concern for the environmental safety, minimization of waste or preservation of precious resources for the future generation.

2. Review of Literature

Many empirical studies have been conducted about Advertisement and its impact on consumer behaviour in India and abroad. The major emphasis of research has been on various issues like impact of advertisements, role of media, etc. However, there are less studies being done on the impact of Green advertising on buying behavior of consumers.

An advertisement elicits consumer's response and that response; whether positive or negative will in turn build brand perception and thereby his buying decision. The decision to buy depends upon the perception formed by a customer through the advertisements. Thus, advertisements have the power to build perception, and, can lead to generation of sales. (Matulich, Haytko & Rustogi, 2012)

Green Advertising is multi-dimensional and has juxtaposed the very idea of advertising focusing on aspects like creating awareness among customers, increasing sales, gaining customer loyalty, concern about the nature. It has become a very effective tool to face the new challenges that have erupted in the market besides competition. (S. Banerjee, C.S Gulas, and EIyer)

Advertisements serve multiple purpose. They aim at not only creating awareness or educating the customers but it goes beyond that by changing the buying pattern of the people by influencing their thoughts and belief system, thereby, building positive perception about the products and also lead the customers towards a particular buying decision. (D'Souza 2007)

Markets are changing and so are its dynamics. Various parties like the marketing managers and the academicians are trying to understand these changing dynamics, the green needs which have arose now due to various problems which have been experienced and they are trying to redesign their offerings to suit the needs of these green consumers who stress upon environmental sustainability and are ready to modify their consumption pattern in order to meet these new challenges. (Chan, 2008)

One of the emerging trends in marketing is 'Green advertising'. It is observed that such concepts are critical to understanding one's responsiveness to advertising, considering preconceived attitudes/ beliefs and their level of flexibility. Advertisements remould and shape the perception and attitudes of the consumers, thereby, enabling them to embrace the changing trends of the market. (Coleman, Bahnan, Kelkar& Curry, 2011)

Research Gap

From the above literature review, it can be cited that many researchers have conducted research study on Green advertising, its role in shaping perception of consumers but hardly there are any studies conducted on the factors enabling in adopting Green products in suburban areas like Ulhasnagar. Considering the gap, present study is undertaken on the consumers in the city of Ulhasnagar.

3. Research Methodology:

The study is conducted in the city of Ulhasnagar which is in the Thane district, situated 58 km from Mumbai. This city is part of Mumbai Metropolitan Region managed by MMRDA. As per 2011 census, the population of Ulhasnagar was around 506,098h, which gives an estimation of the level of consumption, thereby, the availability of business opportunities here.

The research study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire that was administered to 200 consumers in the city of Ulhasnagar using non-probability convenient sampling method. The sample was 69 percent young population between the age

of 18 to 40. Besides this, secondary data is collected from several sources like books, journals, periodicals and publications by government agencies. The research methods used for this study are descriptive and exploratory in nature. A number of secondary sources have been thoroughly studied for reaching to the conclusion. Apart from these sources of information, newspapers and websites has also been used for collecting data. Findings are presented with the help of charts, graphs and other relevant diagrams. Analysis is made with statistical tools like descriptive statistics.

4. Objectives of the Study:

The present study is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To evaluate the holistic meaning of Green advertising
- To evaluate the level of awareness about the concept of ‘Green advertising’.
- To evaluate the perception and attitude of customers towards Green Advertising
- To identify the factors promoting the adoption of green products

5. Hypothesis of the study:

- H0: Consumers do not have positive perception towards Green Advertisements and hence they do not prefer to buy Green Products
 - H1: Consumers have positive perception towards Green Advertisements and hence they prefer to buy Green Products
- H0: Consumers prefer to buy Green Products

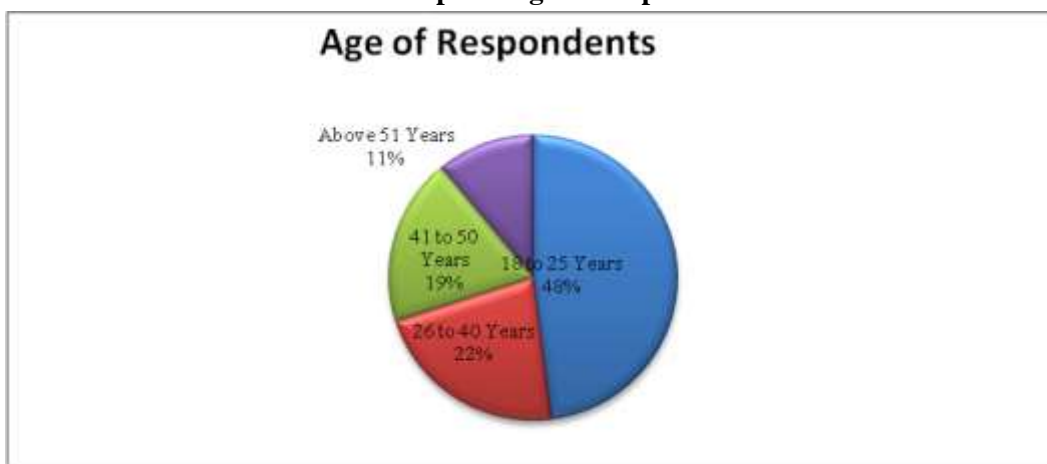
6. Findings, Analysis and Interpretation

Data for the present study was collected from consumers in the city of Ulhasnagar. Following section deals with the primary data collected during the course of present study:

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

Age	Responses	Percentage
18 to 25 Years	96	48
26 to 40 Years	44	22
41 to 50 Years	38	19
Above 51 Years	22	11
Total	200	100

Graph 1: Age of Respondents

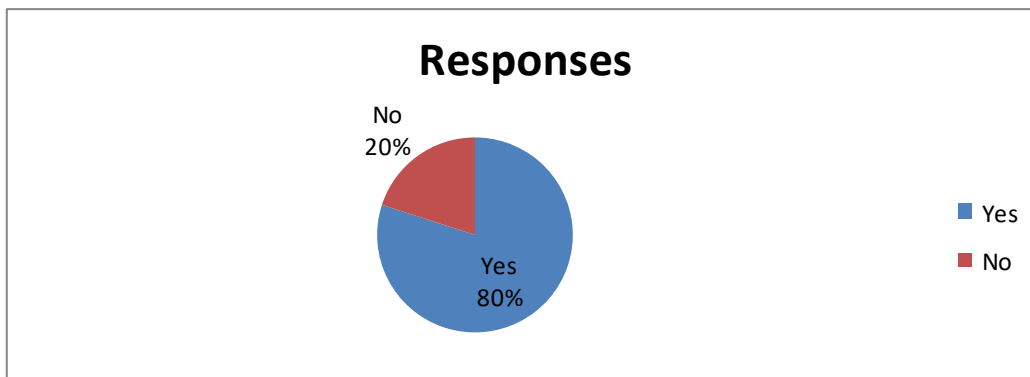


It was observed that 48% respondents belong to age group 18 to 25 years, 22% respondents belong to age group of 26 to 40 years, 19% respondents belong to the age group of 41 to 50 years and 11% respondents belong to the age group of 51 and above years

Table 2: Awareness about Green Advertising

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	160	80
No	40	20
Total	200	100

Graph 2: Awareness about Green Advertising

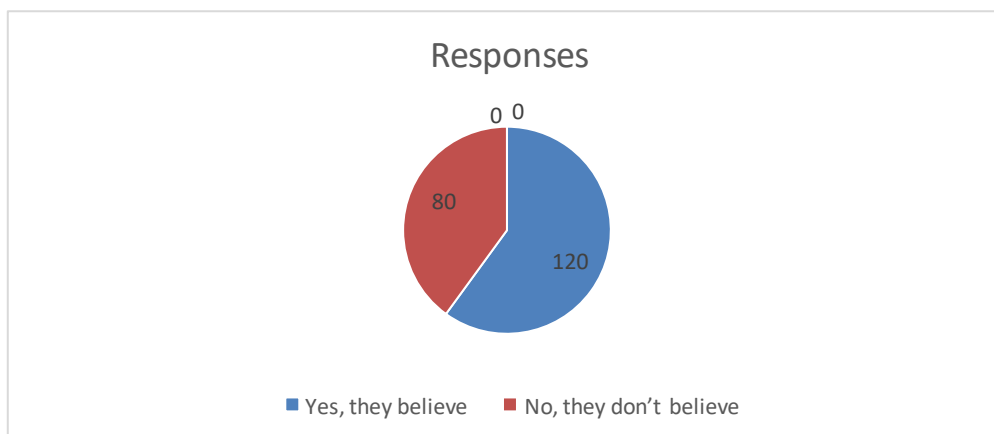


It was observed that, 80% of respondents are aware and have heard Green advertisements whereas 20 % respondents were unaware about the concept of ‘Green Advertisement’.

Table 3: Perception of respondents towards truthfulness of Green Claims

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes, they believe	120	58
No, they don't believe	80	42
Total	200	100

Graph 3: Perception of respondents towards truthfulness of Green Claims

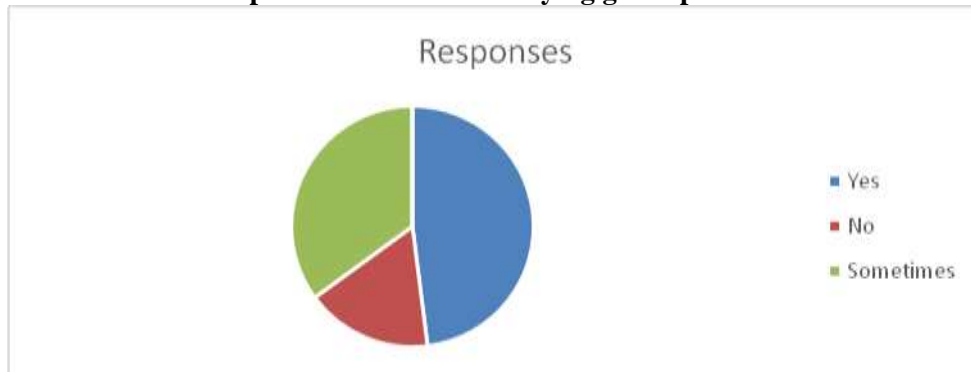


In the present study it was observed that only 58% of the respondents believe that the claims made by the companies are true whereas, 42% of the respondents felt that they are only tall claims. The products may not necessarily be fulfilling the criteria of being “Green”.

Table 4: Preference for buying green products

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	96	48
No	34	17
Sometimes	70	35
Total	200	100

Graph 4: Preference for buying green products

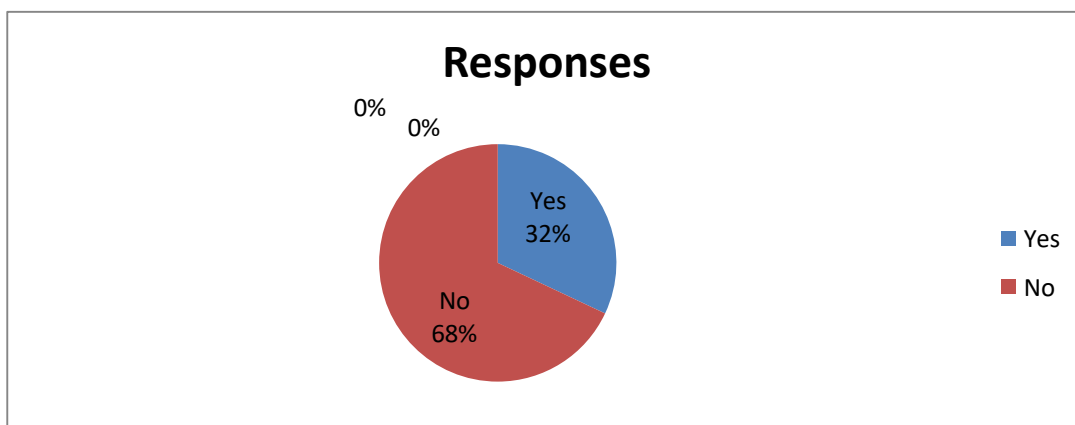


It was found that only 48% of respondents actually prefer buying green products everytime whereas 17 % said, they sometimes buy the green products. A vast number around 35% of the respondents said they do not prefer buying green products.

Table 5: Verification of claims before making buying decision

Response	Responses	Percentage
Yes	64	32
No	136	68
Total	200	100

Graph 5: Verification of claims before making buying decision

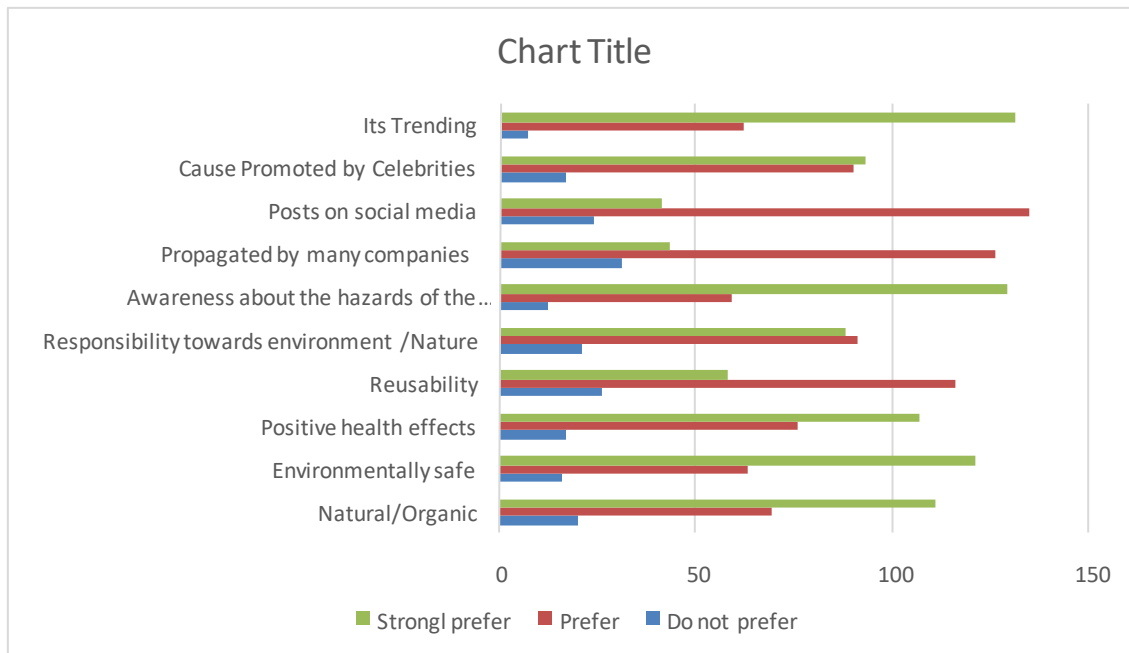


From the responses sought, it was observed that 32% of the buyers actually look for some validation to be sure about the claim made by the company whereas 68% of the people simply believe the claims and make buying decisions.

Table 6: Reasons for preferring Green products

Sr. No.	Reasons	Preference Level			Total
		Do not prefer	Prefer	Strongly prefer	
1	Natural/Organic	20	69	111	200
2	Environmentally safe	16	63	121	200
3	Positive health effects	17	76	107	200
4	Reusability	26	116	58	200
5	Responsibility towards environment /Nature	21	91	88	200
6	Awareness about the hazards of the otherwise available products	12	59	129	200
7	Propagated by many companies	31	126	43	200
8	Posts on social media	24	135	41	200
9	Cause Promoted by Celebrities	17	90	93	200
10	Its Trending	7	62	131	200

Graph 6: Reasons for preferring Green products



From the study, it was found that people prefer green products nowadays because these products are presumed to be environmentally safe and it was found that they have become more aware about the health hazards. One of the interesting reasons what people mentioned was that “green” is trending.

7. Interpretation & Hypothesis Testing

Table 7: Mean Responses of Preference Level

Sr. No.	Attribute	Preference Level			Total	Mean Responses
		Do not prefer	Prefer	Strongly prefer		
1	Natural/Organic	20	69	111	200	2.455
2	Environmentally safe	16	63	121	200	2.525

3	Positive health effects	17	76	107	200	2.45
4	Reusability	26	116	58	200	2.16
5	Responsibility towards environment /Nature	21	91	88	200	2.335
6	Awareness about the hazards of the otherwise available products	12	59	129	200	2.585
7	Propagated by many companies	31	126	43	200	2.06
8	Posts on social media	24	135	41	200	2.085
9	Cause Promoted by Celebrities	17	90	93	200	2.38
10	Its Trending	7	62	131	200	2.62

As in most of the cases, Mean responses are more than 2, thus *we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis*. Therefore, it can be said that the consumers have developed positive attitude towards Green advertisements and nowadays are preferring Green Products.

8. Conclusion

Green marketing as a concept and practice is trending. Every Company has realized that Green advertising can prove to be an innovative and powerful tool to survive in the market. The Companies have realized that the Sales can be driven by attracting customers by highlighting green features and eco- friendly products which are obviously a safeguard for the environment. Through effective Integrated Marketing Communication, the companies can successfully impact the attitudes of the consumers and can encourage them to use green products which are environmentally safe and are need of the hour. This initiative can also build strong trust and would promote lasting relationships with the customers as this initiative exhibits socially responsible behavior on the part of communicator of eco-friendly goods. It was seen that consumers are turning towards more on natural products like green tea, organic food, organic products, wax paper etc. which are viewed as organic in nature and will also ensure protection and sustainability of the environment in the long run. Consumers are positively responding towards green advertisements and reciprocating by preferring to buy eco- friendly products which not only serve their needs but also enable to contribute towards the cause of preserving the resources for the future generation and avoiding deterioration of the environment further. Organizations are developing ‘green ‘ image through these advertisements which acts as a strategic tool for them to win over the markets. It has also enabled the companies to reach mass consumers with their green image. Although many organizations have realized the need of green communication and have introduced successfully good advertising strategy to tap the potential targeted group and yet there are others also who must still realize this need of the hour. Businesses will have to be more concerned about the impact of their activities on the society at large in terms of environmental degradation, carbon footprints, huge e-waste, and depletion of natural resources and will have to proactively take steps to contain the problem. They will have to design and market their products accordingly. Green advertising, thus, not only has a narrower objective of promoting green products and services but also to build a green economy where the future generation also has abundance and harm free environment to survive.

9. References

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