

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN INFLUENCING GREEN BUYING DECISIONS BY PROMOTING GREEN PRODUCTS

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<https://doie.org/10.65985/APER.2026148694>

ABSTRACT

The concern for the environment, has created awareness among consumers about the type of goods they consume; whether or not it is environment friendly. And social media is acting as a catalyst in this regard, creating consciousness regarding benefits of using green products. Social media is a platform to reach millions of users and to create awareness of the type of product they can use. The focus of this paper is to investigate the role of social media on green purchase intentions. The aim is to study the role of social media as a tool to create awareness regarding green products. The current study is based primary data to understand consumers awareness and preferences towards green products. Besides, the secondary data from marketing journals and reports are used to understand the marketing implications. The findings of the study indicates that there is a significant difference between the two genders in terms of conscious about the environmental safety and conservation. Social media has a direct and positive relation with the buying intentions of consumers. Further, brand image also plays an important role in influencing consumers purchase decisions. The outcome of the study may prove to be beneficial for marketers, in general and social media marketing, in particular

KEYWORDS: social media, green buying behaviour, environment, green products, sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

With the advancement in technology, machinery and rapid growth of the economy and industries, the consumption pattern of consumers has improved to a great extent and with the same environmental degradation has also been increased. With the increased awareness regarding environment has led the consumers to think twice about their consumption pattern, product purchases. Growing sustainable pattern among consumers has goaded industries and manufacturing units to make environment consciousness a priority and core management objective, rather than only focusing on profit maximisation. Purchasing behaviour of modern consumers are generally impacted by “eco-anxiety” and “eco-depression”. To enhance green consumption firms are investing more on green marketing. It has in turn emphasize the importance of social media as it plays a vital role in promoting green marketing.

Due to the increasing environment issues and awareness among consumers the demand for the eco-friendly products is increasing. The “*theory of planned behavior (TPB)*” model has been used to study and recognize Customers perceptive regarding green actions. “*Theory of planned behavior (TPB)*” can be stared as the elementary substance in this study for well understanding of consumer’s green obtaining purpose. Various research has been done on green selling but nominal study on green obtaining purpose of consumers has been done. Internet community

marketing and perceptive factors are positively correlated to consumer's green product purchase intentions.

In past few years many brands have identified that social media channels are valuable for facilitating consumer interactions, decision making, building consumer relationship. Also, it has increased consciousness regarding green benefits of the sustainable products. Consumers, on the other hand, will not buy green items right away after hearing about them on social media. In general, customers' green product purchase intentions are influenced by social media marketing and cognitive variables. Beside from that, marketers have always been interested in word - of - mouth because of the psychological and social framework in which individuals have a natural desire to trust and communicate. As a result, word-of-mouth marketing, particularly on social media, is the single most significant non-paid advertising that marketers want to enhance.

Traditional marketing varies from social media marketing in that it takes little financial investment to enable two-way interactions that are tailored to consumer preferences for long-term success. Social media may assist bridge the gap between businesses and customers, as well as break down fundamental hurdles to long-term behaviour, such as a lack of interest, a lack of understanding, and scepticism. Consumer decision-making processes differ depending on the product category. Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, the Chinese instant messenger WeChat, and Instagram are the most popular social networking sites in the globe, according to 2020 research by "We Are Social" and "Hootsuite". Many businesses use social media to build eco-marketing activities, therefore it's crucial to see if and how these efforts are recognised and followed by customers.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The objective is to identify and discuss various social media factors that contribute to sustainable consumption and also promotes green consumption. The aim of this study is to understand the awareness about purchasing green and its benefits.

Secondary sources were used to gather Information through referring to the books and the previous studies related to the research, the articles and the scientific journals to prepare the theoretical frame.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agnieszka Bojanowska and Monika Kulisz (2020), explains with the help of survey methodology that only over a third of the respondents (36.6%) said they were interested in eco-marketing but had not researched it, and 30.9 percent stated they had never heard of it. One of the motivators for their purchases, according to 17.8% of participants, was because the notion was dear to their hearts. Eco-marketing was recognised by 7.9% of respondents, although they saw it as a marketing gimmick used by corporations to increase sales. Finally, 6.8% of people were aware of eco-marketing and used it in their daily life. Customers are fully aware of zero-waste and ecological actions that constitute advertising via social media outlets. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with previous findings from our interactions with members of online green groups. The degree to which the respondents paid attention to eco-marketing was the difference that was observed. It was discovered that in many situations, eco-marketing efforts are largely recognised by product packaging made of environmentally friendly materials and promotion strategy such as social media posts.

Ying Sun and Shanyong Wang (2019), have raised the fact that Consumers' intentions to consume sustainable goods are favourably influenced by attitudes, and the impacts are stronger in the male subgroup, high-income families, and the Gen Y grouping than in the other categories. Furthermore, the findings indicated that males are more enthusiastic about engaging in sustainable practises than women. It's unsurprising that young people are more enthusiastic about buying green products than older people (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003). Millennial customers are concerned not only with the immediate but also with the long-term consequences of their current activities, and they choose to become lifelong sustainable market buyers. As a result, these young consumers are more interested in sustainable products than the older population, and they are inclined to buy green items when shopping (D'Souza et al., 2007). Attitudes, subjective standards, and perceived behavioural control all impact customer intentions to buy green items, but price consciousness has a detrimental impact. Consumer attitudes toward and inclinations to purchase green products are favourably influenced by product knowledge and "Perceived consumer effectiveness" (PCE) Subjective norms, brand awareness, and PCE are all favourably influenced by social media marketing. PCE is crucial in green purchasing because it has the largest influence on attitudes and intentions and is the most impacted by social media marketing.

Stephanie Anne Nicole Bedard and Carri Reisdorf Tolmie (2018), explains with the help of "social norm theory" which states that brand authenticity plays a vital role in green product success in social media platform. "Social norm theory describes the situation in which individuals incorrectly perceive the attitude and behaviour of peers and other community members to be different from their own when in fact they are not". The findings reveal a favourable correlation between social media usage and sustainable buying intentions, indicating that social media usage is linked to green purchase intentions (H1). Because social media users are more likely to have high green purchasing intentions, companies should consider spending additional resources to improve social media engagement and knowledge of their sustainable products. Firms may engage in influencers to attract millennials and improve channel dynamism by dedicating more funding to their social media initiatives, delivering unique promotions via social media, or investing in influencers. Furthermore, this study discovered a link between degrees of digital interpersonal influence and green purchasing intentions, demonstrating that online interpersonal influence is linked to green buy intentions. Overall, online interpersonal influence and social media usage were found to have good correlations with green buying intentions. As a result, millennials who often utilise social media for consumption-related activities and engage in online interpersonal discussion about these activities may be more inclined to buy green items. This information may be used to develop an integrated digital strategy that spans several social media platforms and encourages online interaction among millennial customers. The factors explained 18.6 percent of the variation in green buying intentions. This demonstrates that online interpersonal influence and social media usage are two components of the green consumption behaviour jigsaw.

Hyun Min Kong, Alexander Witmaier and Eunju Koc (2020), explains with help of mediation and moderation analysis, found that sustainable advertising has a beneficial influence on brand assessments, but that the positive effect is constrained by trust. Consumers who recognize the brand had a less favourable reaction to increasing their sense of sustainability. Furthermore, greater sustainability impression had a negative impact on the luxury brand, diluting it. According to the report, companies may improve brand perceptions by using trust to raise expectations that a brand is ethical and honest. The advertisement claims were ambiguous since there was little information on how long-term promises were enforced. Consumers can detect implicit deceit in assertions that are too imprecise or ambiguous to be thoroughly confirmed.

As a result, the brand post may look to be an attempt to greenwash the company (Schmuck et al., 2018). Second, while customers are becoming more conscious of environmental concerns, environmental preservation is still a secondary factor when it comes to selecting and purchasing items, especially for high end brands where sustainability clashes with quality, value, and prestige connotations.

María Teresa Ballestar, Miguel Cuerdo-Mir and María Teresa Freire-Rubio (2020), states that the authors used "Gephi software" to create a social network of people that create or disseminate sustainability information, demonstrating that sustainability is a growing issue on social media, with thousands of micro-communities having dialogues about it but no one directing or steering them. We also recognised the various types of accounts that are important in the development and dissemination of messages on social media. As a result, we've established that social media listening is a potent tool for complementing more formal disciplines of study, with the added bonus of delivering real-time information on a wide range of social science themes. In this way, our work adds to the existing literature on the idea of "sustainability", bridging a gap. It demonstrated how social listening via Twitter may be used to create a map that systematises people's sentiments, views, and traits posts posted on the social network by people on a specific theme, such as sustainability.' Our findings also showed that Twitter may be a helpful source of information for scholars and organisations. We demonstrated how to collect a sample of tweets regarding a certain topic and create a comprehensive social network map of accounts based on their action and interactions.

Muhammad Mohsin Zahid, Bakhtiar Ali, Muhammad Shakil Ahmad, Ramayah Thurasamy and Naila Amin (2017), explains with the help of questionnaire that Customer awareness of environmental issues has risen as a consequence of social media, prompting green product marketers to seek data on their customers' environmentally aware purchase habits. As a result, there has been a progressive increase in research concentrating on green goods in connection to consumer behaviour and communication. The current study aims to investigate consumers' attitudes toward green products as well as their interactions with other consumers. Consumers demonstrate their care for the environment and its conservation, according to the findings of this survey, which is reflected in their shopping behaviour. The study indicates that, while environmental concern is the primary driver of green product purchases, other factors are also important in determining customers' intentions to buy green items. Social variables relating to environmental awareness and appreciation in society were discovered to be a key contributor to good green product behaviour. Aside from that, the concern for repercussions mediation implies that purchasing intentions for green items are influenced not just by environmental factors, but also by how well the product addresses people's concerns about its usefulness. As a result, this supports the idea that, in addition to other variables, the advantages customers obtain from green products are also significant. As a result, the researchers argue that marketers should not ignore consumers' worries and should emphasise the advantages of doing so.

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN INFLUENCING GREEN CONSUMOTION

It's no longer just about having a dialogue on social media; it's also about making money. Consumer buying patterns have always been influenced by social considerations, but the widespread use of cell phones and social media has elevated word-of-mouth to new heights. "Our environment is a common resource, one that has increasingly been challenged by the fast development of extractive activities to meet up with demands fuelled by consumerism and moulded by industry,"(Dosemagen, 2017) highlighted. In general, technology has given us the opportunity to modify parts of our behaviours and conduct "greener" business, but we're still

falling behind the rate of environmental change because to our abuse of 83 percent of 18f resources. Social media has evolved into a significant instrument for allowing the public to engage in influencing or blocking environmental choices made by governments and companies that impact us all in the past. It has paved the path for others to do so. According to the "Pew Internet Project", 67 percent of individuals who use the internet utilise social networking sites. "Those aged 65 and older use social media at a rate ranging from 29 percent to 35 percent of those aged 65 and older."

Social media is quickly getting popular among environmental organisations, not just as a technology, but also as an image builder. The notion of electronic communication may project an image of "being green" or "sustainability" in their communication channels, so contributing to environmental conservation and preservation initiatives. It is still being determined how the audience will react to this. However, it is expected that social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter will be equally useful for environmental organisations to get access to user mind space. It is also useful channel to spread the message and build communities.

Furthermore, because the Internet allows individuals and organisations to quickly share knowledge to large audiences, overcome geographical limitations, lower costs and censorship hurdles, facilitate networking opportunities with potential sponsors, and engage in two-way communication, some previously disadvantaged environmental organisations are now able to level the playing field. Online and social media channels are frequently used by environmental organisations as a news source. The Internet allows less well-known environmental organisations to disseminate their own material, avoiding the role of journalists as gatekeepers. It has been witnessed that social media and sustainability play an increasingly crucial part in how businesses behave themselves and communicate about themselves over the last decade. They've worked together to push business to new levels of openness, provide opportunities for more involvement, encourage enterprises to reconsider their position in society, and unify citizens, corporations, and communities behind a common goal.

CONCLUSION

Social media is a medium for dynamic communication and interactions. It's also a good technique to build an emotional connection between a company and its customers since it encourages holistic thinking through impromptu dialogue. Multiple research claims that advertising authenticity was much higher in traditional sources such as newspapers, radio etc. but advertisement through social media creates a long-term impact on customer's mind. It is a communal place that causes others in the same networks to think twice. If anyone likes a post, it will appear in the suggested accounts of others.

Customers will connect with sustainable companies immediately if they perceive the company is really concerned about the environment. The most important factor in influencing purchase intent and digital engagement is brand credibility. It has been shown that social media users appreciate brand authenticity even more than quality, preferring brands that coincide with their stated ideals. According to this study, customer awareness of green brands is the most important element in their decision to buy green products. Firms should assist consumers in expanding their awareness of green products and benefit by supplying eco-friendly items at competitive costs to non-green products. The firms marketing strategy should be more invested on educating the consumers about the process of production, promotion and packaging of eco-friendly goods. This will in return make the consumers more inclined towards environment

friendly purchasing. From the above study, green brand positioning was shown to have a favourable and significant influence on green goods buying intention. Consumers will consider the purchase of green items as vital as a result of green brand positioning and also, the marketers have the advantage to differentiate their product and create more demand and consumer intention of green purchasing. Further The findings of a quantitative study show that shoppers' attitudes about green companies are positively related to their intentions to buy green products. Buying green items demonstrates that the buyer is environmentally conscious. Eco-label brands goods assist consumers as a leader for eco-friendly products while buying the products. Buyers' intents to buy green items are harmed by price concern. According to the findings of the multigroup SEM study, female and Gen X subgroups are more price aware, and low-income households are more readily restrained when purchasing green items. When consumers' budgets are constrained due to reduced earnings, they may be hesitant to acquire green items, resulting in price perceptions as roadblocks. Lower-income groups had stronger price search activities and price consciousness, according to previous study. To expand the green market, more specialised certification or labelling should be used. Furthermore, consumers' price awareness is negatively influenced by their perception of behavioural control. As a result, enhancing customers' views of control over green purchasing, such as progressively increasing income, would likewise improve consumer perceptions of control. Non-luxury firms in cultures where customers are highly conscious of sustainability would benefit the most from sustainable advertising initiatives on social media. Furthermore, non-luxury businesses will benefit the most from cultural and environmental sustainability promises. Despite the fact that environmental sustainability is the prototype of green advertising, cultural sustainability is a unique factor that begs to be explored further in research on green communication.

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