

Emerging Shades of Green Marketing Conscience Among the Population of A Small Island Economy-A Case Study of Mauritius

Policy document

Critical issues/challenges

In recent decades, the population of Mauritius comprising both consumers and producers have expressed increasing concern about the environmental impact of products. Considerable attention has been directed toward green products such as organic foods, recyclable paper, phosphate-free detergents, energy-efficient lighting. Consumer attitudes to nutrition and healthy foods and sensitivity to environmental issues have also been found to be influential in Mauritius. The present study reviews the changes and attitudes of the population toward business and the environment and explores the demand and supply characteristics of green products in Mauritius.

Two main surveys were conducted. The purpose of the first survey was to investigate the awareness and intention of the Mauritian population to purchase green products, their consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward green products, and reasons that hinder the purchase of these products. The second survey was directed at the company executives and its purpose was to examine their attitudes toward green versus conventional products, and the challenges they are facing in marketing green products in Mauritius. This research provides information on green marketing practices of firms in Mauritius. It focuses on areas where companies need to concentrate and the ways they can effectively deploy a Green Marketing strategy. It addresses a comprehensive review on the concept of green marketing among companies in Mauritius, its foundation as well as its development. The various implications of using green marketing practices by firms are also discussed.

The present research also provides information on a study, which assessed the potential of the environmental market in Mauritius. The purpose of this exploratory study was to determine the environmentally friendliness of 1000 respondents in Mauritius and establish consumer perceptions of these products. One of the main findings of the research was that 'green' products have achieved substantial awareness among consumers and they are no longer regarded as a gimmick or a fad. Looking to the future of green marketing in Mauritius, it examines the dynamic nature of ecologically conscious consumer behavior. Making a substantial long-term commitment to the environment in Mauritius can dramatically improve the public's attitudes towards the business community as well.

Policy options and decisions

Green responsibility

Survey results indicate that Mauritian executives are of the opinion that environmental concerns play a fundamental role in modern companies (mean=4.68 on a scale of 5). But there is an increasing need for businesses to emphasise on green marketing concerns in their mission statements. Green efforts must also prove to be economically viable for companies to engage in green marketing activities.

Green Marketing remains the responsibility of the main stakeholders – consumers, the business and the government. The results show that a serious effort to green up a company's image can yield long-term and even global benefits.

PACKAGING ISSUES, LEGISLATIONS, GREEN MARKETING PRACTICES

Increasing attention is being paid to packaging, a component of product in the marketing mix. It is being recognized that packaging is important not only from a functional viewpoint, but also in terms of marketing to the customer. One of the constraints on packaging is environmental issues. These are becoming increasingly important internationally, from both a legislative and consumer perspective. In this study the perceptions of the members of the packaging value chain as regards the functional, marketing and environmental issues surrounding packaging have been examined. It is found that functional aspects appear to be the most important, followed by marketing aspects.

SEGMENTATION OF GREEN BUYERS IN MAURITIUS

The survey results urge the need to identify members of the population who are likely to be concerned about environmental issues. The main green cluster has been identified as the Pure Greens, the Moderate Greens, the Light Greens, the Poor Greens and the Indifferent Greens. 33.6% of the Mauritian Buyers are 'Light Greens', that is, with a high potential for moving into an upper level in the green hierarchy. The challenge that is faced now is to institutionalize good systems and procedures that can facilitate the fast transformation of the Mauritian market into a green one. It is important to create awareness among consumers that there are alternatives and that even small contributions that involve little sacrifice actually make a difference. A debate on the roles of and responsibilities of the various stakeholders and interested parties as well as the right structure and guidelines for the eco-labels is a necessary first step to address the above challenge.

CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS IN MAURITIUS AND GREEN SENSITISATION CAMPAIGNS

The findings depict that there is a need to sensitise the Mauritian population on green marketing practices on a continuous basis. In this respect the consumer associations in Mauritius have been playing a passive role in sound environmental marketing behaviour. There is a need for Consumer Associations to initiate more rigorous actions towards the implementation of green marketing practices.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT TOWARDS GREENING PRACTICES

If companies of Mauritius succeed in attracting green-oriented consumers, they will have to continue working to keep them. To provide good environmental products and sound environmental messages, the Government of Mauritius must play an active role. Government should invest heavily in recycling plants, waste water management and sensitise the population on general issues about environmental problems and the need to cater for environmental concerns. The use of green bins must be encouraged by Local Councils (Municipalities & District Council) of Mauritius. The government is also urged to make green products tax free so as to encourage green promotion. Investment in green marketing activities should be facilitated.

GREEN COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

In many instances, the environmentally damaging aspect of a product as technical in nature (e.g mercury on batteries or phosphate in washing powders), consumers need to be educated on the hazards of using such products and the benefits of using their green equivalents. Thus communication is another key factor to the marketing of the marketing of green products.

The present suggests that opportunities exist for advertisers to implement successful green appeal campaigns.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSUMERISM

Participants with specific beliefs about the environmental impact of the purchase and use of consumer products are very likely to hold pro-environment attitudes. For instance, people who attached importance to the purchase of products made with recyclable materials or packaged in reusable containers were more likely to care about the quality of the environment and the wise stewardship of natural resources. Women and men were equally likely, however, to attempt to conserve natural resources, to take part in political or organizational activities for environmental reasons, and to consider safety to the environment when buying a product.

ECO-STRATEGIC CHANGE MANAGEMENT CONCEPT

Just like any integrated marketing communication approach, green marketing must involve extensive coordination across functional areas to be effective. The level of greening--strategic, quasi-strategic, or tactical--dictates exactly what activities should be undertaken. Strategic greening in one area may or may not be leveraged effectively in others. A firm could make substantial changes in production processes but opt not to leverage them by positioning itself as an environmental leader. So although strategic greening is not necessarily strategically integrated into all marketing activities, it is nevertheless strategic in the product area.

To realize these strategic benefits will require an innovative firm with the will to question the very basis of what and how it operates. Innovative companies choosing to adopt a strategic environmental marketing focus need to continually reevaluate and improve their overall performance. This is necessary because knowledge and acceptable environmental practices are continually changing.. Such a focus requires extensive commitment of

resources and top-management support, which may be difficult to maintain, especially in times of broader turbulence in the business environment.

CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTALISM AND ADOPTING AN ENVIROPRENEURIAL APPROACH TO MARKETING

Corporate environmentalism is an imperative for business, and companies that go green should have a first-mover advantage over those that do not--although it is a continuous rather than a onetime process of renewal that improves a firm's environmental and financial performance. To this end, companies may wish to consider adopting the enviropreneurial approach to marketing, "blending environmental concerns with marketing strategy in search of innovations and opportunities" . By seeing these new situations as opportunities, firms can strive to maximize them and provide improved competitive advantage at the expense of competitors that either overlook such opportunities or view them as threats.

GREEN MANAGEMENT CONCEPT IN MAURITIAN ENTERPRISE

Companies, like organisms, face a constant need to adapt according to fundamental changes in the ecosystems they inhabit. Just as physical ecosystems select the best adapted organisms for survival and the least adapted for extinction, the "business ecosystem" confronts managers with pressures to conform to structural shifts in the business climate in order to survive and thrive .For the adaptive manager seeking to address the demands of the green revolution, green management must be pervasive; environmental imperatives and opportunities cover all dimensions of corporate operations. With respect to the managerial goal of efficiency, pollution prevention provides a variety of opportunities to limit costs and maximize the quantity of production for any given input.

STAYING AHEAD OF GREEN ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

Managers will also be increasingly forced to adapt to the rapid pace of environmental legislation and enforcement. No well-managed company will be without a comprehensive environmental risk program. In fact, such a program must now occupy the very highest priority in any general managerial strategy. Not keeping up with the wave of green law will expose laggards to devastating consequences, something no responsible manager should tolerate.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD & MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Given the widespread, global adoption of the ISO 9000 quality standards, it is reasonable to assume ISO 14000 will be likewise embraced. ISO 14000 certification will allow firms in Mauritius to market globally without constraints due to environmental concerns and to promote its products as being eco-friendly to an increasing environmentally oriented international markets.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Both consumers and managers have very positive attitudes toward organic produce. However, from the managers' point of view, limited demand and high prices were major concerns. On the other hand, consumers were primarily concerned by the limited availability.

In order to increase demand, considerable efforts are needed to increase availability and improve the distribution systems. Making organic produce an essential part of the product lines of conventional supermarkets will increase availability, thus improving distribution and reducing price differentials. Furthermore, as more organic produce arrives in the marketplace, prices are likely to drop. More demand will lead to more supply and more competition, and, as a result, lower prices.

Government policies related to the provision of market information to marketing decision-makers and consumers could also improve the performance of the organic marketing system. Promotional efforts will have to focus on 'educating' consumers on the relationship between organic produce, health and the environment. Lifestyles of Mauritian consumers are changing and, given the increased interest in nutrition and exercise, organic sensibility is likely to be well received by consumers.

GROWTH OF ORGANIC FARMING AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Furthermore, given managers' concern about the lack of production standards for organic produce, government legislation on standards and labelling would increase their willingness to stock such products. Governmental support, such as the assignment of special farming zones for organic produce, subsidies, and the reorganisation of the certification system will facilitate the growth of organic farming. Establishing comprehensive national standards will also help the export of organically produced products, thus providing new opportunities.

DEEPER COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL/GREEN CONCERNS BY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS IN MAURITIUS

While some service organizations have already begun to respond to environmental concerns, there are vast benefits to be gained by a broader and deeper commitment to the environment by service organizations. However, three cautions are in order. First, the service economy comprises very diverse industries and organizations. Not all of them are equally capable of contributing to the preservation of the environment because of their varied natures. For instance, services such as hotels or hospitals can be expected to have a greater environmental impact through the adoption of green practices than accounting or legal firms, as a result of their greater reliance on tangible components and resource dependent processes. Second, it is important to note that environmental trade-offs often exist when green practices are adopted. Third, the importance of delivering service quality to customers must never be forgotten in making green marketing changes. If customers believe that an environmental change has reduced the quality of the service they receive, they will seek new service providers. Fortunately, answers to such dilemmas may be possible in the near future as our abilities to perform life-cycle assessments for products and processes improve.

CONCLUSION

The policy decisions above provide new insights into the future move that the main stakeholders, businesses, consumers and the government, must take for a greener Mauritius. However, the greening phenomenon is not static and it is highly recommended that the green movement be continuously studied and necessary strategies and tactics be adopted to cater for the intricacies of the Mauritian consumers and environment.