Exploring Consumers' Attitudes towards Green Marketing and Convenience

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Abstract

This research seeks to better understand consumers' perceptions of green marketing and convenience. The hypotheses were tested by conducting a scenario-based experiment. The results obtained confirm that green marketing practices and convenience have a positive effect on consumer behavior and convenience positively moderates the relationship between green marketing practices and willingness to buy, attitude toward company, and consumer commitment. Probably the most interesting result of this study is that an increase in convenience leads to a higher increase in willingness to buy, attitude towards company, and consumer commitment than green marketing practices. Implications, general limitations of current research and guidelines for the future studies are provided in the end.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Green Marketing, Convenience, Scenario-Based Experiment

Introduction

The importance of green marketing practices has generated a lot of attention in recent years. Specifically, there is an increased concern of consumers for environmental issues. These concerns often affect consumer behavior such as consumers' willingness to buy, attitude towards company, and commitment. At the other end of the spectrum, many companies realize the impact of green marketing on their competitive position. Marketers started to design green marketing strategies to satisfy the needs of the environmentally concerned consumer.

In the past several decades there has been a revolution in the way consumer view their relationship with companies. Consumers exhibited a high degree of environmental concern and channeled it into some environmental friendly purchasing acts, which was the driving force behind companies' motivation to adopt the green marketing practices in their operations. Previous studies explored this relationship intensively. These studies ranged from concepts like strategic green marketing (McDaniel and Rylander 1993), to antecedent of green purchases Chan and Lau (2000), and market segmentations of green consumers (Chan 2000; Paço and Raposo 2009). However, research is lacking on exploring how do consumers

perceive the interaction of green marketing practices with other concepts. The objective of this paper is to explore the impact of green marketing and convenience on consumer behavior, specifically on consumers' willingness to buy, attitude towards company, and commitment.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. First, we review the literature review and hypotheses are developed. Next, we discuss our experimental methodology and the results. Finally, the article concludes by offering a discussion of the findings, implications, limitations and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

To explore consumer behavior, dependent variables, willingness to buy, attitude towards company, and commitment were selected based on common consumer behavior attributes in the literature. Willingness to buy is defined as the possibility of a consumer's purchase intention of a specific product (Dodds et al., 1991). Consumers' willingness to buy is influenced by different types of green marketing communication messages (Grimmer and Woolley, 2014). Mostafa (2006) conducted a research to understand the impact of different attitudinal and psychographic factors on the green purchase behavior of the Egyptian customers. Result of the study revealed that disbelief about environmental claims is negatively related to consumers' intentions to buy green product. Consumers are willing to buy products that are not harming environment (Chen, 2010). A survey conducted by Greendex (2012) supported this finding that more than fifty percent of the consumers buy green products as often as they can.

Attitude is defined as a person's internal evaluation of something such as a product, and this evaluation can be favorable or unfavorable" (Mitchell and Olson, 1981). However, we will define attitude towards the company as a person's favorable response towards the company. Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) conducted a research to study the elements which influence the consumer attitude and behavior towards green practices and also to explore the consumers' willingness to buy these practices. The findings of the study revealed that consumers who are using the hotel services are concerned about green practices. They show positive attitude towards the company and prefer those hotels which are practicing green strategies.

Commitment refers to "an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship" (Moorman et al., 1992, p. 316). The commitment concept indicates not only to the continuity of the relationship, but also to the growth of the relationship (Udorn et al., 1998). A consumer's commitment potentially leads to intentions to repeat or increase previous behaviors, specifically, green and socially responsible behaviors (Lacey and Kennet-Hensel, 2010). Consumers' commitment to environmental issues has triggered a change not only in the demand for more green products and services but also in the sensitivity of companies towards green marketing issues (Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Fraj-Andrés et al., 2009).

Green marketing is the marketing of those products which are considered to be environment friendly by the customers. Kilbourne (1998, p. 642) defined green marketing as "it generally involves the production of "green" products for sale to "green" consumers who are admonished to recycle the waste from their consumption". Baker and Hart (2008, p. 727) defined green marketing as "The holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the needs of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way. Peattie (2001) identified evolution of green marketing in three phases; the first phase is "ecological green marketing" and its focus was only those industries and product that had a

direct impact on environment, for example air pollution. The second phase is "environmental green marketing" and its focus was on using clean technology which used to produce innovative products and eliminated waste and pollution at the design stage. The third phase is "sustainable green marketing" and its focus is not just on reducing the environmental damage but also on how to achieve sustainability.

Various researches have been conducted in the past to understand green marketing and customers concern. Lee (2008) conducted a study to understand that what factors affect green purchasing behavior of the young consumers of the Hong Kong. Result of his study showed that social influence was the top predictor of the purchase behavior of the young customers, second factor was the environmental concern, third factor was self-image in environmental concern and the last factor was the perceived environmental responsibility. Pickett-Baker and Ozaki (2008) investigated if companies can build up greener brands using marketing and branding techniques and initiate greener pattern of consumptions, when there are enough of environmentally friendly products available already. The result of the study suggests that consumer favors greener products produced by greener companies but most of them cannot identify such products. Besides that the results shows that customers do not find the current marketing relevant or engaging for the products. Based on the existing literature, to confirm the main effect, the following hypotheses were tested:

H1: An increase in green marketing practices leads to an increase in a) willingness to buy, b) attitude towards the company, and c) commitment.

Review of the literature indicated that convenience is a multidimensional concept. There are various forms of convenience. For example Keh and Pang (2010) examined convenience under two headings: access convenience and benefit convenience. Access convenience refers mainly to the location of the store and benefit convenience refers to the time and effort customers spend on the service. In this study by convenience we refer to access convenience. Jones et al., (2003, p. 703) define convenience as "providing a service to a consumer at a place that minimizes the overall travel cost to the consumer". Rowley (2005, p. 578) stated that "convenience today means the out of town stores, with plenty of parking and preferably within ten to fifteen minutes of drive". Srivastava and Kaul (2014) conducted a research to study the impact of social interaction and convenience on consumer satisfaction and the intermediating role of customer satisfaction. The result of their study show that both social interaction and convenience affect customer satisfaction and experience. A recent study by Khajehzadeh et al. (2015) also presented the importance of the convenience of accessing a retailer for consumers. In many cases distance and access convenience can change consumers' shopping goals and perceived product benefits, especially in a green marketing context. Another point is green marketing practices and different convenience concepts were studied intensively in the literature. However, less is known about how the interaction effects of green marketing practices and convenience relate to consumer behavior. Therefore, based on the existing literature, the following hypotheses were tested:

H2: An increase in convenience leads to an increase in a) willingness to buy, b) attitude towards the company, and c) commitment.

H3: An increase in convenience positively moderates the relationship between green marketing practices and a) willingness to buy, b) attitude towards the company, and c) commitment.

Methodology

In order to test the proposed hypotheses a scenario-based experiment is used. Four treatment cells resulted from the 2x2 factorial design. There were two levels of green marketing (high, low) and two levels of convenience (high, low). The dependent variables include willingness to buy, attitude towards the company, and consumer commitment. The standard "back-translation" method (Green and White 1976, Deshpande et al. 1986) was used to translate the questionnaire from English into Turkish.

Participants in this research were 84 undergraduate students at a major university in Turkey. The sample was 62% male, and the average age was 21. After a brief introduction, participants were randomly assigned to one condition in the 2 x 2 factorial experimental design. Participants read a scenario that describes an exchange relationship between a seller and consumers. The scenario included manipulations of the green marketing and convenience. High green marketing practices were manipulated by describing the company as attempting to reduce the negative social and environmental impacts of existing products and production systems, and promoting less damaging products and services, while in low green marketing practices, company was described as not attempting to reduce the negative social and environmental impacts of existing products and production systems, and not promoting less damaging products and services. High convenience was manipulated by describing the company as easy to contact, don't take much time to reach, easy to get to the company's location quickly, whereas in low convenience situation, the company is described as not easy to contact, takes much time to reach, and not easy to get to the company's location quickly. After reading the scenario, participants were asked how they think a typical consumer would react to the scenario. This method can accurately represent underlying attitudes of participants and reduce social desirability bias (Fisher 1993).

Item scales for the dependent variables were adapted from existing scales. Items to measure willingness to buy were adapted from Baker, Levy, and Grewal (1992). Items to measure attitude towards the company were adapted from Mathwick and Rigdon (2004) and items to measure consumer commitment were adapted from Beatson, Coote, and Rudd (2006). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Endpoints for these scales ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Manipulation and realism check measures were used to ensure the experimental manipulations were successful and to determine if the situation described in the scenario was realistic respectively.

Data Analysis and Results

Scale purification was used to assess the convergent validity, reliability, and discriminant validity of the constructs. Convergent validity was determined by using principal component analysis. A minimum Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin score of 0.7 and a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity are considered necessary to reliably use factor analysis for data analysis. Both requirements were met with a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin score of 0.865 and a Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at the 0.000 level. Factor analysis was conducted to check the loadings of the items on the three dependent variables. The items formed into two groups but one attitude towards the company item was cross-loaded with willingness to buy items. Thus this item was deleted (item 4 - The typical consumer would say positive things about this

company's products to other people.). The other 10 items were not cross-loaded and had strong loadings (over 0.5) on the intended variables (Hair et al. 2010). Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Alpha values above a 0.8 cutoff were sought for all variables as that level suggests good correlation between the item and true scores (Churchill 1979; Nunnally and Bernstein 1994) (see Table 1).

Table 1
Factor Loadings, and Coefficient α

Measurement Items (Scale items)	Loadings	Source
Willingness to Buy (α=0.950)		Baker et al. (1992)
The likelihood that the typical consumer would shop in this store is high.	0.84	
The typical consumer would be willing to buy gifts at this store.	0.92	
The typical consumer would be willing to recommend this store to friends.	0.92	
Attitude towards the Company (α=0.937) The typical consumer would have a favorable attitude toward doing business with this company over the next few years.	0.83	Mathwick and Rigdon (2004)
The typical consumer would think that this company is clearly the best company of its kind with which to do business.	0.85	
The typical consumer would believe this is a good company.	0.87	
Commitment (α=0.952)		Beatson et al. (2006)
The typical consumer would plan to return to this retailer.	0.87	
The typical consumer's relationship with this retailer is something the consumer intends to maintain.	0.91	
The typical consumer's relationship with this retailer will last a long time.	0.89	
Maintaining a long-term relationship with this retailer is important to the typical consumer.	0.89	

Discriminant validity was examined with average variance extracted. As suggested, AVE values were over 0.5 (Hair et al. 2010), and were greater than the squared phi correlations (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Therefore, the results offer support for discriminant validity. The AVE and squared correlation values can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Average Variance Extracted

	WTB	ATC	COM
WTB	0.873		
ATC	0.590	0.834	
COM	0.514	0.666	0.898

In order to insure experimental manipulations were successful, manipulation checks were performed. Mean scores for each group were consistent with the intended manipulation grouping (Mhigh green marketing=5.84 > Mlow green marketing=1.90; Mhigh convenience=5.78 > Mlow convenience=1.78). Therefore, participants did perceive differences between two levels of green marketing and convenience experimental conditions. Due to the scenario-based nature of the experiment, a realism check was performed in order to check if participants understand and respond to experimental tasks (Louviere, Henser, and Swait 2000). The participants were asked if they thought the scenario was realistic and if they could imagine themselves in the situation described. Dabholkar's (1994) two-item realism check measure was used. The realism check showed that participants considered the scenarios to be realistic with an average score of 6.02 on a 7-point scale.

Main Analysis
In order to test the hypotheses in this research, a MANOVA was run for determining if independent variables have a significant main effect on dependent variables. Results of the initial MANOVAs were all significant. The general prediction that green marketing was positively related to the dependent variables in this research was supported (Wilks' lambda = .421; F = 35.81; p < 0.001). The general prediction that convenience was positively related to the dependent variables in this research was supported (Wilks' lambda = .334; F = 51.8; p < 0.001). Finally positive interaction effect of green marketing and convenience on dependent variables was supported (Wilks' lambda = .617; F = 16.13; p < 0.001). Based on these results, the analysis moved forward with additional ANOVA tests for each dependent variable. Table 3 presents the overall ANOVA results. Dependent variable cell means are presented in Table 4.

Table 3
ANOVA Results for Main and Interaction Effects

Effects	WTB F-statistic	ATC F-statistic	COM F-statistic
Green Marketing (GM)	35.88 (p<0.001)	29.62 (p<0.001)	62.37 (p<0.001)
Convenience (C)	47.41 (p<0.001)	41.14 (p<0.001)	94.94 (p<0.001)
GM x C	5.28 (p=0.042)	10.29 (p=0.003)	39.42 (p<0.001)

Table 4
Dependent Variable Cell Means

Dependent Variable	Green Marketing	Convenience	Mean
Willingness to Buy	Low	Low	3.222
		High	5.227
	High	Low	5.032
		High	6.033
Attitude towards Company	Low	Low	3.111
		High	5.212
	High	Low	5.000
		High	5.700
Commitment	Low	Low	2.036
		High	5.534
	High	Low	5.131
		High	5.887

ANOVA tests for the dependent variable were all statistically significant and supported all three hypotheses. In support of H1a, H1b, and H1c, simple main effect prediction that green marketing practices would have a positive effect on willingness to buy (F=35.88; p<0.001), attitude towards the company (F=29.62; p<0.001), and consumer commitment (F=62.37; p<0.001) was supported. The results showed that convenience would have a positive effect on willingness to buy (F=47.41; p<0.001), attitude towards the company (F=41.14; p<0.001), and consumer commitment (F=94.94; p<0.001). Therefore, H2a, H2b, and H2c were supported. Finally, the results supported H3a, H3b, and H3c showing that an increase in convenience positively moderates the relationship between green marketing practices and willingness to buy (F=5.28; p=0.042), attitude towards the company (F=10.29; p=0.003), and consumer commitment (F=39.42; p<0.001).

General Discussion
The purpose of this research was to examine predictions related to the imposition of time pressure in supply chain relationships. Based on existing literature hypotheses were developed in order to quantitatively test the effects of green marketing and convenience. As the green marketing practices increases, the experimental data suggests that willingness to buy, attitude towards the company, and consumer commitment all increase. Previous research has supported these findings suggesting that consumer behavior towards to green marketing practices is positive (Cheah and Phau 2011, Kalafatis et al. 1999; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki 2008). The experimental data also suggests that an increase in convenience leads to an increase in willingness to buy, attitude towards the company, and consumer commitment. Previous research has suggested that convenience is related to positive consumer behavior

(Keh and Pang 2010; Khajehzadeh et al. 2015) Perhaps the most interesting finding in the research is interaction effect of green marketing practices and convenience. Convenience positively moderates the relationship between green marketing practices and willingness to buy, attitude towards the company, and consumer commitment.

Implications, Future Research and Limitations

This article makes contributions to the overall body of knowledge in consumer behavior research. Although the effects of green marketing practices have been studied intensively, research is lacking in the interaction effects of green marketing with other important constructs such as convenience. Gaining a greater understanding of the interaction effects of green marketing and convenience on consumer behavior can provide valuable insight into marketing literature. This research also makes a methodological contribution to the body of knowledge. This study contributes to the literature by conducting a scenario-based behavioral experiment.

The results of this research may also have several implications for managers. The findings show that green marketing practices have a positive effect on willingness to buy, attitude towards the company, and consumer commitment. Implementing green marketing practices into operations can be costly. However, in the long run companies can realize real gains since there is a continuous demand from consumers for green marketing practices. Similarly convenience is also crucial for consumers. Probably the most essential implication of this study is an increase in convenience leads to a higher increase in willingness to buy, attitude towards company, and consumer commitment than green marketing practices. Therefore, managers need to formulate strategies focusing on not only green marketing practices but also the convenience, as it is more important for consumers. These insights may help managers make better marketing decisions and preserve essential relationships with consumers.

As most other studies, this research also has limitations and, therefore, future research opportunities. The first area of future research could determine other variables that are interacting with green marketing practices. Although this research tested the interaction of green marketing practices and convenience, future research can address other potential important dimensions that interact with green marketing practices. Examples might include quality of products, and price fairness. The second area of future research could examine other dimensions of consumer behavior. In this research, dependent variables were selected based on common consumer behavior attributes in the literature. Other consumer behavior dimensions such as trust, satisfaction, and loyalty can be explored in future studies. Finally, the generalizability of scenario-based experimental methodology is somewhat limited. Although scenario-based experiments are able to address precision and control, they are limited with regards to generalizability. More generalizable results can be obtained in future studies by employing survey methodology.

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