CONSUMER RESPONSES TO GREEN ADVERTISING IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

An awareness of environmental degradation has taken a long time to arise all over the world and also in Turkey. The rapid growth of the population and thedevelopment of the world economy created consumption culture in many developed and developing countries. So, companies have expanded their capacities to increase production and to market new products ever so often. As the result of these facts, the natural resources are becoming inadequate and the environmental pollution is gradually growing. These issues are creating pressures on companies and consumers to go green. Consequently, green advertising is seen as one of the tools for sustainable development and satisfaction of companies. The purpose of this study is to examine how consumers in Turkey perceive and respond to green advertising. Randomly selected consumers are questioned according to their attitudes toward environmental issues, environmental commitment, and attitudes toward green advertising. The results are evaluated by using correlation and regression analysis.

Keywords: Green consumer, green advertising, environmentalism

TÜRKİYE'DE YEŞİL REKLAMA TÜKETİCİ TEPKİLERİ

ÖZET

Çevresel bozulmanın etkilerinin fark edilmesi dünyada ve Türkiye'de çok uzun zaman almıştır. Hızla artan nüfus ve dünya ekonomisi gelişmiş ve gelişmekte olan ülkelerde tüketim kültürünü ortaya çıkarmıştır. İşletmeler üretimlerini arttırmak ve pazara daha sık yeni ürün sunmak adına kapasitelerini genişletmişlerdir. Bütün bu yaşananların sonunda, doğal kaynaklar yetersiz kalmakta ve çevre kirliliği giderek artmaktadır. Bu gerçekler işletmelere ve tüketicilere çevreci olmaları yönünde baskı yapmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, yeşil (çevreci) pazarlama işletmelerin sürdürülebilir gelişmeyi ve iş tatminini sağlaması için gerekli araçlardan bir tanesidir. Bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye'deki tüketicileri yeşil (çevreci) reklâmlara karşı algı ve tepkisini ölçmektir. Tesadüfî örnekleme yöntemine göre seçilen tüketicilere çevresel konulara karşı olan tutumlarını, çevreye olan katkılarını ve yeşil reklâmlara karşı olan tutumlarını ölçecek sorular sorulmuştur. Sonuçlar korelasyon ve regresyon analizlerine göre değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimler: Yeşil(Çevreci) Tüketici, Yeşil (Çevreci) Reklam, Çevrecilik

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1. INTRODUCTION

Environment can be defined as a system composing of living (germs, plants, animals and people) and non-living (land, water and air) components (Demirer, 1992:34). All plants and animals adjust to the environment in which they are born and live. A change in any component of the environment or addition of detrimental factors into the ecosystem may cause discomfort and affect normal life. Any unfavorable change or degeneration in the environment is known as "Environmental Pollution" (http://jharenvis.nic.in) This is mainly caused due to over-use of natural resources.

We use the term "green" simply to indicate concern with the physical environment (air, water, land) (Shrum et al., 1995:72). The green movement has so much momentum that the term "going green" had 15.6 million hits on Google in January 2008 and 31 million hits just over two months later (Erdman, 2008:18).

A new paradigm is taking roots that involve a sustainable worldview. In this new worldview, we are a part of nature and not apart from it. This can be summarized in Table 1 (Wasik, 1996:6).

Table 1: Old Versus New Paradigms

Old Worldview	New Worldview
Continuous, unbridled growth	Sustainable, green economics
Conquer nature, reap resources	Biophilia (affinity for nature)
Environmental compliance	Eco-auditing
Marketing to fill needs	Marketing to sustain life
Materialism	Personalism
Industrial Prfoduction	Industrial ecology
Design for obsolescence, disposal	Design for environment
Cost accounting (profit/loss statement)	Full cost accounting
Departmentation, reductionism	Holism

Today, there are several companies producing different kinds of products and services. So, consumers face an enormous number of brands in every sector in their daily life. This leads the organizations to differentiate. Nowadays, one of the most popular marketing tools for differentiation is green advertising. With the increasing number of green customers, businesses attempt to understand and respond to external pressures to improve their environmental performance (Chen, 2008:281). The concept of green advertising has also been strongly reinforced by the media which might have induced the development of green products.

Advertisements promoting several green versions of products (bulbs, detergents, batteries, refrigerators etc.) are commonly found in Turkish market. As Turkey continues its economic, social, political, and technological development, the incresing number of wealthy and educated Turkish consumers have become more concerned about the adverse impact of ecological degradation. So, companies appeal to these consumers through advertising that emphasizes eco-friendliness. For this reason, advertisers need to enhance their understanding of how Turkish customers respond to environmental advertising claims. Less is known about how consumers respond to environmentally friendly products advertised which relay specific environmental claims or messages. (Kim, 1995:12).

The aim of this study is to profile the green consumer in a manner that will assist in the development of advertising strategies.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Who is Green Consumer?

Over the years, a majority of consumers have realized that their purchasing behavior had a direct impact on many ecological problems. Customers adopted to this new threatening situation by considering environmental issues when shopping (e.g.checking if the product is wrapped in recycled material) and by purchasing only ecologically compatible products (e.g.biodegradable paint, CFC-free hairspray or unbleached coffee filters.) (Laroche et al., 2001:503).

Green consumer is defined as "individiuals looking to protect themselves and their world through the power of their purchase decisions".(Ottman, 1992:5) In other words, green consumers' purchase, product usage, and disposal decisions are driven by a desire to preserve nature's ecological balance (Mark, 1998:1). Accordingly they demand product design, production, and company policies with environmental considerations (Kim, 1995:1). However they want products that are better for the environment, not products that significantly detract from their lifestyle (McDaniel and Rylander, 1993:6).

Green consumers are divided into two categories; those whose purchase behavior is greatly influenced by environmental concerns called the active green consumers and those whose purchase behavior is minimally influenced by environmental concerns called the passive green consumers (D'Souza and Taghian, 2005:53).

The importance of understanding what motivates some consumers to adopt environmentally friendly products, and what prevents others from doing so is important. Much of the literature examining consumers' environmental behavior suggests that the more information they have, the more environmentally responsible their actions will be (Balderjahn, 1988:53; Burger and Corbin, 1992:80; Maloney et al.1975:788; Gill et al.1986:542). Besides, consumer behavior research has

suggested that it does not only take the willingness to get involved to change behavioral patterns, it also requires that consumers' needs and preferences for ecologically friendly products must be met in terms of the availability and affordability (Blackwell et al., 2001:372; Bhate, 2001:171).

Consumer based studies attempt to determine characteristics of green consumers that differentiate them from other consumers. Such studies typically focus on demographic (age, income, education) psychographics (attitudes, values), and behavioral segmentation variables.

2.2 The"Green" Concept in Marketing Implications

Marketing is often argued to be perceived as the least ethical of all the business functions. The emergence of environmentalism has added further impetus to these criticisms (Crane, 2000:28). The green marketers are generally accused of being the ringmaster of ever-increasing consumption, and thus firmly implicating it in the attendant problems of resource and ozone depletion, species destruction, water and air pollution, insufficient landfill capacity, and climate change.

Green marketing is a term that became popularized in the 1980s to describe efforts to address the needs and wants of a segment of consumers who express environmental concerns (Polonsky and Mintu-Wimsatt, 1997:49). This definition describes marketers' attempts to develop strategies targeting the environmental consumer (McDaniel and Rylander, 1993:5). It encompasses any activity by businesses that lessen burdens placed on the environment. These include environmental support, waste and recycling, environmental conservation, environmental restoration and environmental creation, environmentally harmonious energy and environmentally friendly products (Conners, 2002:2). There are two basic approaches to green marketing. The first is a defensive or reactionary approach. The second is an assertive, aggressive strategy. In defensive approach companies can do the minimum in order to avoid negative consequences, meet minimum standards in order to avoid a consumer boycott, or react to competitors' environmental moves but do more than is needed to keep pace. The assertive approach involves being a "first mover" and also doing more than is required by government or expected by consumers (McDaniel and Rylander, 1993:6).

Consumer sensitivity to environmental issues does not always translate into purchase behavior. Particularly, green marketers attempt to promote green consumerism by making consumers believe that by purchasing environmentally friendly products, they contribute significantly in protecting the environment (Cox, 2006:117). Accordingly, they create new green-products, eco-friendly packaging, and new environmental campaigns to convert this latent desire for environmental quality of life into actions and activities that actually promote such environmental quality of life. (Morris, Hastak, & Mazis, 1995:329)

Businesses must first decide which environmental problems they can and should address. Every business is affected by environmental concerns in one way or another. Some businesses may have control over packaging or recycling; others may have direct control over air or water pollution. The key is deciding which concerns are feasible to address and then implementing appropriate strategies (McDaniel and Rylander, 1993:5).

Green marketing requires the reorganization of the entire marketing mix, everything from product, packaging, labeling, advertising and pricing through distribution, positioning and promotion.

2.3. Incorporating Green Marketing Into "Green Product" and "Green Pricing" Strategies

Spurred by high levels of environmental concern and demands for more responsible business practices, numerous firms across many industries during the 1990's pursued an environmental product differentiation strategy and began to claim in their advertising and on product packaging that their products and services damaged the environment less than other products with which they competed (Conners, 2002:1).

Green products are defined as products that minimize the environmental impact of product use, making consumption less harmful to the environment (Janssen and Jager, 2002:298). Often, green products are identified as being phosphate free, recyclable, refillable, ozone friendly or environmentally friendly (Polonsky, 2002:208). Green products are also diverse in nature and include those that reduce solid waste through recyclability, reusability, durability or biodegradability, reduce pollution, have fewer chemical additives or more organic composition, reduce the depletion of natural resources, reduce harm to nature or are less toxic than competing products (Herbig and Butler 1993:6; Troy 1993:42).

The environmental benefits attributed to green products could operate on three levels.Thus, these benefits can be related to the good performance of the product (functional benefit), feelings and emotions the consumer experiences when he uses the product (experiential benefit) and the needs of social approval or external personal expression (symbolic benefit) (Park et al., 1986:136).

The production of the green product creates the pricing problem. There is a general assumption that greener products will necessarily cost more, and the basic discussion is about how much green premium the consumer will be willing to pay. For some products, consumers express their concern for the environment by making a financial sacrifice to promote brands that will cause less damage to the environment. That is consumers may feel positively about buying green products and doing their part for the environment (Mobley et al., 1995:166) the green premium may also relate more to company pricing strategy than to economic necessity. Where green products are being placed alongside a company's

conventional products, there is a danger that it will only accomplish a switching of some existing consumers to the greener version. If the greener version then replaces the conventional version, customers who are unconvinced by the arguments for greener products and who were loyal to the old version may well go elsewhere. Introducing a greener product at a premium price solves this problem. It differentiates itself from the existing version on the basis of eco-performance and price, allowing customers wanting to switch away from the conventional to do so, but in a way that also generated additional margin for the company (Charter and Polonsky, 1999:64).

2.4. Green Advertising Concept

Advertising is one of the most important communication tools used by green marketeres to promote awareness of their environmentally friendly products and to stimulate corresponding purchases. To achieve these communication objectives, environmental advertising typically includes information or claims ("safe for environment", "biodegradable", "environmentally friendly", "photodefradable", "recycled", "recyclable", "ozone friendly", and "green" etc.) about how the advertised product or the advertiser can contribute to environmental improvement or help reduce environmental degradation (Polonsky et al., 1997:23).

The environment is an important consumer concern and as a consequence, environmental advertising is likely to be seen as an area with the potential to have a significant impact on the consumer's life (Davis, 1994:875).

Advertising has three functions; to inform, remind and persuade. The aim of green advertising is to create awareness and tentative strong attitudes towards brands and companies (D'Souza and Taghian, 2005:60). Consumers form feelings (affect) and judgements (cognition) when exposed to an advertisement which affects their attitude towards the ad and beliefs about the brand (Batra and Ray, 1986:237). Feelings are properties of the individual while cognitive evaluations tend to be properties of the advertisement (Edell and Burke, 1987:86).

Green advertising is defined as "the promotional messages that may appeal to the needs and desires of environmentally-concerned consumers" (Zinkhan et al., 1995:3). Banerjee et al. (1995) defined green advertising as any advertising that meets at least the following criteria: "explicitly or implicitly addresses the relationship between a product/service and the biophysical environment; promotes a green lifestyle with or without highlighting a product/service; and/or presents a corporate image of environmental responsibility".

Carlson et al. (1993) used four typologies to categorize environmental information typically conveyed in green advertisements. These are: Product orientation (This product is biodegradable.), process orientation (20 percent of the raw materials used in producing this product are recycled.), image orientation (We are committed to

preserving our forests.), and environmental fact (The world's rain forests are being destroyed at the rate of two acres per second.)

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample

The survey was conducted to 200 respondents selected with the method of random sampling, residing in İstanbul, the most developed but polluted city of Turkey. All questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 100 percent response rate.

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents showed that more than half of the respondents were male (65%) and married (55%). Most of the respondents (43%) were between the ages of 25-35 and more than half of the respondents were undergraduates and graduates (56%). A very high percentage of the respondents (%72) were employees with income levels between 2001-4000 TL (%32) and 4001 TL and over (%32) (US$1=1,50 TL).

3.2. Measures

Survey method has been used. The survey consists of four main parts: a) Attitudes toward environmental issues b) Environmental behavior c) Attitudes toward green advertising d) Demographic information of participants.

During the research, the revised New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) scale developed by Dunlap and his friends (Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, and Jones, 2000) was used to measure attitudes toward environmental issues. It is a revision of Dunlap and Van Liere's (1978) original NEP and has become the most widely used measure of environmental concern in the world and been employed in hundreds of studies in dozens of nations. It is widely acknowledged as a reliable scale consisting of 12 statements measuring attitudes toward environmental issues. Participants responded each statement by choosing the most representative one from 5 point likert scale (strongly agree=5; strongly disagree=1). Cronbach α value of the scale (0,68) in this study showed it was reliable (α >0,60).

The scale used for measuring environmental behavior is adapted from Haytko and Matulich (2008) and used by the researcher after being developed with additional statements. The scale consisted of 35 statements measuring environmental behavior in 4 subscales (environmental values, environmental activism, environmental awareness, and price consciousness). Participants responded each statement by choosing the most representative one from 5 point likert scale (strongly agree=5; strongly disagree=1). Negatively formulated items were reversed in coding. Cronbach α values of the subscales (ranged from .71 to.79) in this study showed they were reliable (α >0,60).

Lastly, the scale used for measuring attitudes toward green advertising is adapted from Haytko an Matulich (2008) and used by the researcher after being developed with additional statements. The scale consisted of 27 statements measuring attitudes toward green advertising in 3 subscales (cognitive and affective responses, consumer responses to the company and its products, and moral and ethical impact). Participants responded each statement by choosing the most representative one from 5 point likert scale (strongly agree=5; strongly disagree=1). Negatively formulated items were reversed in coding. Cronbach α values of the subscales (ranged from .76 to.82) in this study showed they were reliable (α >0,60).

3.3. Findings

According to the assesment of consumers, the most positive dimension regarding consumer responses to green advertising in terms of environmental behavior is environmental values; while the others have middle effect (Table 2)

According to the results of correlation analysis, it is observed that all the variables have a significant level of relation with each other except two relations; the attitudes toward environmental issues versus consumers' moral and ethical impact towards green advertising and price consciousness versus consumer responses to the company and its products. Attitudes toward environmental issues and all the environmental behavior and attitudes toward green advertising dimensions are in general positive correlation with each other at low level (r<0,40). The dimensions that have relatively strong correlation are environmental activism versus environmental values and environmental activism versus environmental concern (r>0.70). The other dimensions have either middle (0,40<r<0,70) or low (r<0,40) relations with each other (Table 2)

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

	M	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) Env.Issues	3,58	0,51	1							
(2) Env.Values	4,05	0,51	0,28**	1						
(3) Env. Activism	3,62	0,6	0,33**	0,75**	1					
(4) Env. Concern	3,35	0,59	0,24**	0,61**	0,73**	1				
(5) Price Consc.	3,43	0,69	0,14**	0,50**	0,50**	0,44**	1			
(6) Cogn.& Affective Responses	3,43	0,58	0,33**	0,50**	0,53**	0,49**	0,26**	1		
(7) Cons.Resp. to the Comp&Its Products	3,65	0,77	0,23**	0,31**	0,22**	0,22**	0,05	0,65**	1	
(8) Moral& Ethical Impact	3,44	0,61	0,11	0,26**	0,26**	0,17*	0,18**	0,64**	0,54**	1

*p<0,05 **p<0,01

During the research, multiple regression analysis was made to observe impact of attitudes toward environmental issues and environmental behavior dimensions on attitudes toward green advertising. Because attitudes toward green advertising have three dimensions, three regression analyses were conducted. For the regression analysis, Stepwise Regression Model was preferred, which constitutes the regression model by choosing from among the independent variables that affect dependent variable the most.

The dependent variable of the first research was cognitive and affective responses dimension of attitudes toward green advertising while independent variables were attitudes toward environmental issues and all the dimensions of environmental behavior. As a result of the regression analysis, four significant models were obtained. Among the four models was chosen the one that has highest explanatory power on dependent variable. According to the model chosen, independent variables

explain 35% of the variations in cognitive and affective responses. Among independent variables in the model, dimensions of environmental activism, attitudes toward environmental issues, environmental concern, and environemental values are observed as effective on cognitive and affective responses. All the variables make positive impact on cognitive and affective responses. Among the variables, attitudes toward environmental issues dimension are the one that affects cognitive and affective responses the most. (Table 3).

Table 3: Results of the regression analysis regarding cognitive and affective responses

	Beta	St.Error	St.Beta	t	P
(Constant)	0,512	0,322		1,592	0,113
Env.Issue	0,198	0,070	0,173	2,825	0,005
Env.Concern	0,192	0,084	0,195	2,291	0,023
Env.Values	0,229	0,101	0,201	2,280	0,024
Env.Activism	0,176	0,100	0,181	1,761	0,080

R=0,591; R2=0,349; F=26,134, p<0,05

The dependent variable of the second research was consumer responses to the company and its products dimension of attitudes toward green advertising while independent variables were attitudes toward environmental issues all the dimensions of environmental behavior. As a result of the regression analysis, two significant models were obtained. Among the two models was chosen the one that has highest explanatory power on dependent variable. According to the model chosen, independent variables explain 12% of the variations in consumer responses to the company and its products. Among independent variables in the model, dimensions of environmental values and attitudes toward environmental issues are observed as effective on consumer responses to the company and its products. All the variables make positive impact on consumer responses to the company and its products. Among the variables, environmental values dimension is the one that affects consumer responses to the company and its products the most (Table 4).

Table 4: Results of the regression analysis regarding consumer responses to the company and its products

	Beta	St.Error	St.Beta	t	P
(Constant)	1,174	0,487		2,413	0,017
Env.Values	0,407	0,105	0,269	3,87	0,000
Env.Issue	0,233	0,105	0,154	2,210	0,028

R=0,345; R2=0,119; F=13,332, p<0,05

The dependent variable of the third research was moral and ethical impact dimension of attitudes toward green advertising while independent variables were attitudes toward environmental issues all the dimensions of environmental behavior.

As a result of the regression analysis, a significant model was obtained. According to the model chosen, independent variables explain 0.07% of the variations on moral and ethical impact. Among independent variables in the model, only the dimension of environmental activism is observed as effective on moral and ethical impact (Table 5).

Table 5: Results of the regression analysis regarding moral and ethical impact

	Beta	**St.Error**	**St.Beta**	**t**	**P**
(Constant)	2,481	0.258		9,607	0,000
Env.Activism	0,265	0,070	0.259	3,777	0,000

R=0,259; R2=0,067; F=14,263, p<0,05

4. CONCLUSION

The past few decades have been undoubtedly characterized by rapid gloabalization and increased concerns about environmental problems. This fact created a new consumer profile enthusiastic about environmentally friendly consumption goods. Taking into account these developments, companies started to produce green products. Correspondingly, green advertising is on the rise as more and more manufacturers are informing their consumers about enviromental aspects of their products and services. As results of this, environmental appeals are becoming increasingly common in advertising. This research investigates the influence of attitudes toward environmental issues and environmental behavior on consumer responses to green advertising.

All of the variables (attitudes toward environmental issues, environmental values, environmental activism, environmental concern, price consciousness, cognitive and affective resposes to green advertising, consumer responses to the company and its products, and moral and ethical of impact of green advertising) have significant relations with each other except the attitudes toward environmental issues versus consumers moral and ethical impact towards green advertising and price consciousness versus consumer responses to the company and its products. The most important relation is between environmental activism versus environmental values and environmental concern meaning that the consumers having strong environmental values and concern really actively take part in environmental behaviors like using degradable shopping bags, conserve water, electricity and heat at home or office, using public transportation, keep seperate piles of garbage, participating in organizations about environment etc.

The regression analysis results show that attitudes toward environmental issues have the most important effect while the price consciousness has none on consumers' cognitive and affective responses to green advertising. This is due to the pragmatic orientation of consumers, who consistently seek concrete and substantiated product informaton from advertisments to guide their shopping. Another result declares that

consumers' environmental values have the most important effect on consumer responses to company and its products. This is because of the general belief that the companies producing green products are trusthworthy and have socail responsibility. The last result indicates that environmentally activism variable is the most effective one on the moral and ethical impact of green advertising while other variables have no effect meaning that only the enviromentally active consumers can judge the ethical or non-ethical claims of ads. Lastly, price consciousness has no effect on the three dimensions of attitudes toward green advertising. So when green consumers are analyzing the ads they never think of price or never doubt about the additional cost of the green products.

Findings of this research indicate a dramatic increase in environmental consciousness by the Turkish public. The increasing number of environmental advertising plays a critical role in advancing the movement of green consumption. Thus, companies aiming to increase market penetration for existing green product offerings would be recommended to develop advertising campaigns directed at increasing concern about environmental quality in the consumers' mind. It is obvious that natural resources are depleting and so environmentalism is not just a passing fad anymore, it is strongly supported for the long run.

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