



Research Article

Green Marketing and the Commercialization of Healthy Food: Case Study of a Company Dedicated to the Production and Sale of Organic Products, Peru

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Abstract

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has left its mark on humanity as a whole. Consumers have reflected on their lifestyles, which has led them to prioritize health, well-being, and care for the environment by deciding to buy healthier products. Green Marketing is a strategy for the organizations that commercialize healthy or ecological products. This study seeks to determine the relationship between green marketing, its dimensions, and the commercialization of companies. The research is descriptive, cross-sectional, and correlational; a questionnaire consisting of 25 questions was applied to 133 consumers of a company dedicated to the production and sale of organic products in the city of Cajamarca, Peru. The results obtained show the existence of a direct and significant relationship between green marketing and the commercialization of healthy food (0.649). The findings of this study are important for companies in the sector since they conclude that consumers of healthy products in the food industry value a brand based on the green marketing tactics they perceive. Green marketing represents an opportunity for companies that want to successfully commercialize their products.

Keywords: Green Marketing, commercialization, healthy food.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a transformative impact on consumers' lives. Clavellina-Miller (2020) states that sectors such as commerce and tourism

have been the first ones to suffer from the effects of the rapid spread of the outbreak. However, post-pandemic consumers are more interested in their health and environmental care. Therefore, consumer interest in the origin of supplies, raw

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materials, finished products, and/or packaging should be oriented towards environmentally and socially responsible practices. Consumers today think more about the impact of their purchasing decisions on their health, well-being, and environmental or social impact.

Currently, the environment is suffering the consequences of human actions; the increase in damage to the ecosystem is considered a problem that plagues society. The economic, industrial, and technological development and their impact on natural resources have generated alertness in current consumers, developing in them a new profile that incorporates a growing interest in eco-friendly practices in their consumption habits (Cardona et al, 2017). Because of this, the different economic sectors and organizations recognize the importance of incorporating management practices that minimize the impact on ecological resources, achieving the sustainability of their operations (Karamasa et al., 2021; Škatarić et al., 2021).

Facing this new scenario, the different productive sectors and the companies that comprise them are consolidating green marketing as an important marketing strategy that arises from the sensitivity of consumers to the care of the ecosystem (Echeverri, 2010, 2014). Green marketing has been positioned as a set of strategies that could generate a positive impact on the environment. Organizations currently value these practices, since the number of consumers, who evaluate and consider the impact of the characteristics of a product or service on the environment before purchasing it, is increasing (Astuti et al., 2021; Škatarić et al., 2021). There is a strongly emerging tendency for green consumers to emerge as a new target segment and a marketing and commercialization opportunity for companies (Shabbir, et al.2020).

Studies support that green marketing influences consumer attitudes and purchase intention (Cherian and Jacob, 2012). It is increasingly plausible that customers are becoming more environmentally conscious,

identifying themselves as co-responsible for the impact of their purchases. This results in the expansion of eco-friendly products in the market (Yasin et al., 2015).

The food industry is in line with this new trend and is initiating innovation processes to create products that minimize the negative impact on health and the environment (Gelderman; et al. 2021, Suki, 2017). The development of the healthy food sector has experienced sustained growth in Peru in the last decade. It is estimated to be growing by around 25% a year since 2017 (Michilot, 2019). Companies are the most important actors in the promotion of sustainable consumption, directly influencing the transformation of purchasing behavior (Cepeda et al., 2019; Brevia and Mut, 2016). It is relevant for organizations to implement eco-friendly measures, as well as to recognize new consumer profiles and address green marketing challenges. Green marketing can increase an organization's performance, and also capitalize on the brand value (Gelderman et al., 2021; Mahmoud, 2018; Mujahid et al., 2021; Lewandowska et al., 2017). The gastronomy industry is highly competitive; achieving market positioning represents a great challenge; incorporating green marketing into its operation as a growth or diversification strategy would represent an alternative to attract emerging markets (Sanchez, 2016; Škatarić et al., 2021).

Despite the growing importance given to green marketing in the food industry, few studies address its conceptualization and impact on other variables (Azadnia et al., 2021), especially on commercialization. Because of the above, the importance of developing this study is tangible; its contributions will have an impact on the understanding of green marketing by promoting clean production and sustainable consumption through its successful sale, besides determining its relationship with the commercialization of healthy products, determining routes of action for organizations that commercialize eco-friendly products.

The food industry recognizes consumer trends, among them the one that encourages environmental care and promotes the purchase of green products, also known as ecological or eco-friendly products (Gelderman; et al., Suki, 2017; Chen and Chai, 2010). Healthy foods seek to preserve the health of those who consume them, in addition to being environmentally friendly. This category of products is achieving great acceptance by a segment of consumers, especially Generation Z, Millennials, and Generation X; the organizations' customers recognize their preponderant role in protecting the environment through responsible consumption, cooperating with the companies to achieve their sustainable objectives. (Cherian and Jacob, 2012; Dabija, 2021).

The deep involvement of consumers in the environment provided a way for green marketing and healthy products. Shabbir et al. (2020) and Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017) conducted such a comprehensive study on the evolution and conceptualization of green marketing, based on the increased number of articles addressing the topic, that the interest in the concept and its applications rose considerably. This reveals that green marketing is a relevant topic for product commercialization. Moreover, the implementation of green marketing strategies is becoming more and more common in the management of organizations. In Europe, approximately 90% of companies have adopted green marketing as a part of their marketing activities and plans (Rajeev, 2016).

Green marketing is a pro-environmental management modality, oriented to minimizing the negative impact on the ecosystem (González & González, 2005) and focused on assuming under this parameter the base management model defined by traditional marketing, in line with the sale of the green product, including in all its practical bases the respect for the ecosystem (Gelderman et al., 2021). It is also called sustainable marketing and encompasses the process of generating products, establishing prices,

determining distribution channels and communication mechanisms, trying to satisfy customer needs, meeting organizational objectives, and aligning processes with environmental sustainability (Fuller, 1999; Dangelico and Vocalelli, 2017). This requires including the following guidelines: eliminating the concept of waste, repositioning the concept of product, making environmentalism a profitable concept, making production processes more flexible, providing changes in packaging, and modifying the message sent to the target audience, all under an eco-friendly operation scheme (Singh, 2012). Over time, the concept of green marketing has evolved with the growth of sustainability and consumer segmentation (Dangelico and Vocalelli, 2017), encompassing the adaptation of products, production processes, distribution, and promotional strategies to sustainable practices (Shabbir et al., 2020).

When we talk about the traditional marketing process, we refer to the 4 Ps of marketing that constitute the operational basis of the marketing strategy (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Therefore, it is correct to indicate that the concept of "green marketing" includes the management strategies applied by companies aligned with the social approach that incorporates the process of planning, execution, and control of everything related to the tactics of product, price, place, and promotion, in order to meet the needs of consumers, positioning the brand and achieving the goals of the company, all with a minimal negative impact on the environment (Chamorro, 2001). Given this, we can indicate that, in this research, the green marketing construct is made up of four dimensions, through which companies can influence the potential and actual consumer: the 4 Ps, i.e., product, price, place, and promotion. (Astuti et al., 2021; Hashem and Al-Rifai 2011); Mahmoud, 2018; Shabbir et al., 2020)

The green product must satisfy environmental requirements, taking into account that customers' needs include eco-friendly practices by producing products or services that are not harmful to the

external environment. The product is at the center of the green marketing mix, involving all the elements of the product: supplies, packaging, and production (Chamorro, 2001; Fan and Zeng, 2011; Mahmoud, 2018).

The green place refers to the channels through which the product will be available to customers and the points of sale. Its design should consider logistics to reduce emissions, besides guaranteeing recycling procedures within the environmental conditions and requirements, ensuring that the points of sale are free of contamination (Hashem and Al-Rifai, 2011; Mahmoud, 2018; Monteiro Et al., 2015; Shil, 2012).

Green price refers to the monetary quantification established in light of the company's policies regarding environmental considerations imposed by the standards and instructions of the organization. Green prices take into account the protection of people, the planet, and profitability within the framework of the health care of employees and communities, ensuring efficient productivity. The price of green products in some cases is higher than the prices of normal alternatives because green operations add value to the brand, an aspect highly appreciated by the target customers of the product (Solvalier, 2010; Mahmoud, 2018; Rahbar and Wahid, 2011; Shil, 2012).

Green promotion considers which communication strategies cannot be environmentally incompatible; it involves aligning the promotional mix while keeping care of the planet and profit as a support for the strategy. The communication strategy is based on the needs and desires of environmentally responsible consumers (Ankit and Mayur, 2013); Mahmoud, 2018; Monteiro et al., 2015; Shil, 2012)

Once the company has finished with the product design processes, it must launch the product to the whole market. Virtually all works of product development, and commercialization, are conceptualized as the activities that take place to make a product available to the customer, such as

buying, selling, and distribution (Kotler and Armstrong, 2013). It is the process of introducing a new product or production method in commerce, making it available in the market: personal treatment, product quality, and brand positioning (Keller and Kotler, 2012).

Companies that consider making a profit by commercializing their products and also by significantly reducing the impact on the environment in the long term must manage to apply both fundamentals to the management of the marketing mix achieving to sell the products and services that use the advantages of environmental maintenance through waste management in an innovative way (Astuti et al., Mahmoud, T. O. 2018). Likewise, the general objective of this research is to determine the relationship between the green marketing variable, its dimensions, and the commercialization of healthy food in the city of Cajamarca - Peru.

Methodology

This research has a qualitative approach, while its variables assume an ordinal scale. The research objective was to determine the relationship between green marketing and commercialization. Therefore, the study has a correlational scope and is cross-sectional with a non-experimental design. The inductive-deductive method and statistical tests were used to verify the hypotheses. The sample consisted of 133 customers of a company dedicated to the production and sale of organic products, in the city of Cajamarca, Perú, considering a confidence level of 95% and equal proportions for the probabilities.

The instrument applied to the sample is an adaptation of the questionnaire by Castro (2016) which consists of 25 questions with a Likert-type measurement scale, providing 5 scores, where the value 1 corresponds to "totally disagree", while 5 corresponds to "totally agree". The first 10 items correspond to the commercialization variable, while the green marketing variable contains 15 items. The reliability of the instrument obtained a value of 0.792 and was validated by expert judgments.

After collecting the information using an online form, the database was created based on the structure of the variables and their indicators. The non-normality of the data was identified, first using the empirical cumulative distribution function (ECDF) followed by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results were analyzed using the Spearman's Rho nonparametric test, obtained through the SPSS v.25 program.

Results and Discussion

The results formulated from the structure of operationalization of the variables and

the setting of the objectives allow inferring the acceptance of the hypotheses of the study. The existence of a significant direct relationship between the main variables suggests that an increase in Green Marketing will lead to an increase in the commercialization of healthy foods. In other words, if the company directs its operational and communication processes towards the search for environmental care mainly, and their adaptation to environmental changes, the impact on sales and decision making by the direct or indirect public will increase significantly in its favor (Fig 1).

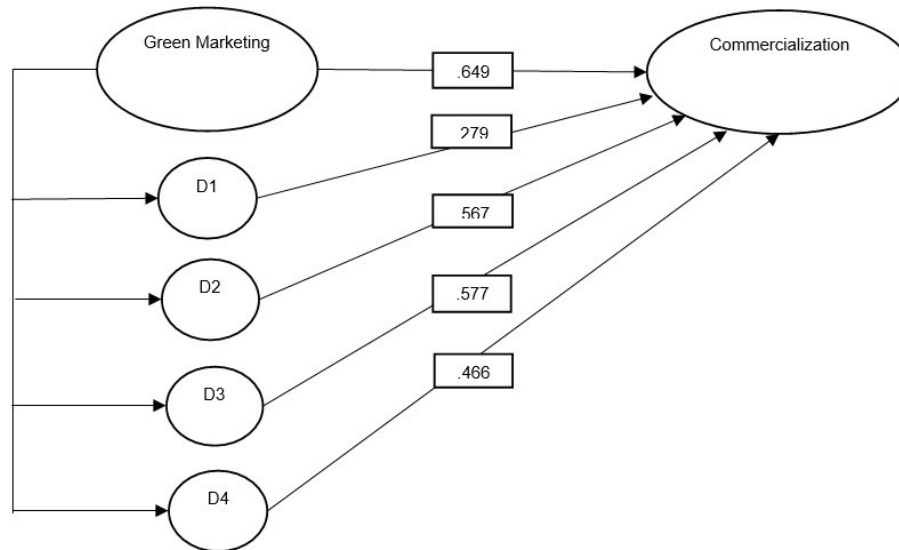


Fig 1. Correlational Results of the Green Marketing Variable, its dimensions, and the commercialization variable

Similarly, when relating the green product dimension with the commercialization variable, a significant direct relationship was found (Rho = .279; $p = .001 < .05$). This relationship continues when analyzing the rest of Green Marketing dimensions with

commercialization, where the following correlational results are obtained: product (Rho = .279; $p = .000 < .05$), price (Rho = .567; $p = .000 < .05$), promotion (Rho = .577; $p = .000 < .05$) and place (Rho = .466; $p = .000 < .05$).

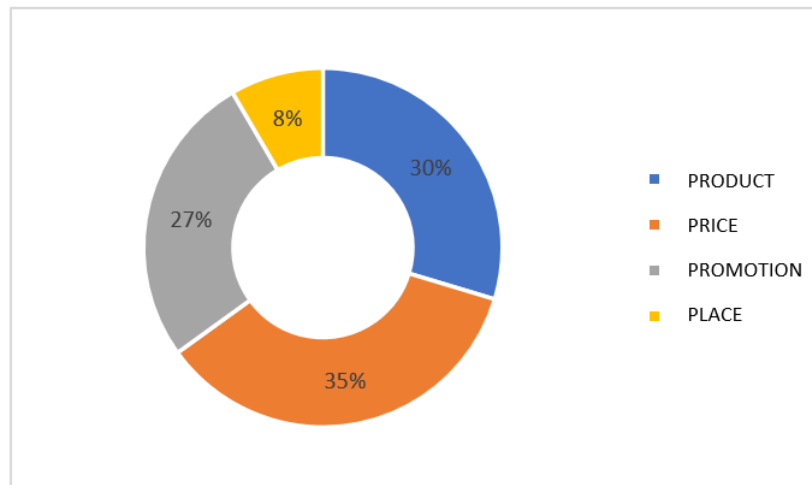


Fig 2. Descriptive Results

The figure shows that price (35%) and product (30%) dimensions make a considerable contribution to the Green Marketing variable. However, the place dimension, with only 8%, opens an improvement opportunity for the company. While it is true that consumers are turning their tastes and preferences towards new tendencies, it is preferable to reinforce with actions of greater impact the innovative schemes such as environmental care.

In light of the above results, it is convenient to reflect that customers' mind is changing; consumer behavior is oriented not only to consumption, to obtaining a better product, but their decision making adds a negative impact on the environment. They are increasingly aware of what sustainable development means. Economics teaches that resources are scarce, yet needs are unlimited, so objectives that prioritize the best and full use of resources are imminent. The results of this research are aimed at the better use of productive factors by reducing the negative externalities charged to biomass.

There have been studies that have addressed the correlation between green marketing and different variables that influence the commercial process. Most of them emphasize the importance of incorporating green marketing

management into the actions of organizations, given its direct impact on the improvement of the processes that influence commercialization. In this regard, Kumar and Lata (2014) stated, after investigating the impact of green marketing on different organizations, that the commercialization of their products increased by incorporating green marketing management. In addition, they indicated that the organizations were able to face their direct competition with greater strength. Astuti et al. (2021) confirmed in their research that green marketing mix is a set of strategies through which the organization can satisfy the needs of a large segment of eco-responsible consumers. They also stated that green marketing management has a significant impact on the purchasing decision of consumers. In line with these findings, Shabbir et al. (2020) demonstrate that green marketing elements such as eco-labeling, eco-friendly products, and green prices positively and significantly influence belief-setting and thus consumer behavior. This coincides with Yasin et al. (2015) who state that green marketing has great importance to enhance the commercialization of organizations, given that a high percentage of their sample was ecologically aware. This has an impact on their purchasing habits as they feel committed to the impact of their actions on the ecosystem. Gelderman et al. (2020)

argued that many organizations now incorporate green marketing tactics into their marketing mix to promote commercialization. Their findings showed the most significant impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. In their approach, Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017) stated that the four Ps of green marketing will be of great relevance for companies seeking to commercialize green products, strengthening the positioning as a green brand, providing a differentiated scheme against traditional products that generates an increased value. As for the marketing mix, they indicated that its management plays a key role in capitalizing on a green brand. This agrees with Estremadoyro (2019) who established that a relevant factor that allows companies to position themselves in new markets is to develop green strategies within their commercial life cycle, through timely communication. Sugandini et al. (2020) showed in their research an influence of green place on green marketing management and, this, in turn, impacts potential customer purchase intention. Mahmoud (2018) found a significant positive relationship between green marketing management and consumer purchase intention. Hashem and Al-Rifai (2011) in their research concluded that green marketing mix impacts the consumer's mental image of the product, influencing the brand perception it contains. Bhatia and Jain (2013) indicated that the growing ecological awareness on the part of consumers highlights the perception of seriousness for companies operating under the green marketing scheme, achieving a significant positive impact on purchase persuasion and preference for eco-friendly brands. Rodrigues et al. (2021) demonstrated that companies with sustainable products and green promotion have key strategies to develop a strong relationship with their customers, based on trust and transparency. The above coincides with Chapa (2016) who indicates that the strategic location of organizations allows an adequate promotion of their green products, which has an impact on the achievement of the companies' objectives. Green Marketing is a new and positive tendency, present in many companies,

which has boomed in recent years. Green marketing is a favorable option for companies to promote their products and, at the same time, make a contribution to the environment.

Conclusions

The findings of this study have relevance for the food industry and companies commercializing healthy products. The COVID 19 pandemic has changed consumer tastes and preferences. Therefore, this study demonstrates the relationship between the variables Green Marketing and Commercialization of healthy products. The level of the relationships between the green marketing dimensions: green product, green price, green place or distribution, green promotion, and the commercialization variable was determined. The study shows that there is a positive relationship between the variables analyzed. This shows that consumers of healthy products are impacted by a sustainable and eco-friendly commercial strategy. It can be stated that there is a direct link between the marketing mix tactics based on green marketing that impacts companies.

Within the process of consumer evolution, we find an increased awareness of the impact of consumption habits on the environment. This creates an important opportunity for organizations to align their objectives of financial sustainability with the environmental sustainability of the ecosystem. It is important for the companies that commercialize healthy products and that seek successful commercialization to assume a green marketing strategy, operationalizing it with tactics at the level of the four Ps.

Understanding the conceptualization of green marketing and its positive and significant relationship with commercialization paves the way for the generation of innovative, creative, and disruptive strategies to boost the performance of the food industry and, especially, of companies that commercialize healthy products. The relationship of each of the dimensions of

Green Marketing, each factor, may impact positively or negatively on the commercialization of the company. Based on the findings, it can be inferred that if we wish to successfully commercialize a healthy product, we must have a green marketing strategy.

From a practical point of view, the conclusions of this research allow organizations to design a marketing plan, based on a commercialization strategy derived from green marketing. In this sense, a reference frame is provided on the impact of the correct management of green marketing, highlighting that green approaches add value to organizations. The systematic review showed few studies in the field of green marketing directly related to commercialization. The use of green marketing techniques should be enhanced; it is essential to expand the studies in this field, developing tactics applied in the four Ps of marketing.

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