

Green Marketing: Analysis and Classification

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Green has been referred to as “fashionable” (Griskevicius, Tybur, and Van den Bergh, 2010), “the new black” (Prothero, McDonagh, and Dobsha, 2010), and a “craze” (Lstiburek, 2008). Although the phrase “green marketing” may be regarded as somewhat novel, academic interest in the marketing activities of for-profit businesses related to the natural environment and enacted with the intention of earning a profit (Henion, 1976) dates back to at least the early 20th century (see Gray, 1914). One reason green marketing has been viewed as novel or trendy may stem from the purportedly cyclical nature of academic, practitioner, and public interest in the subject. Periodic resurgence of academic (Prothero, McDonagh, and Dobsha, 2010), public (Chamorro, Rubio, and Miranda, 2009; Elkington, 1997; Gupta and Ogden, 2009) and practitioner interest (Elkington, 1997) in green marketing has led authors to discuss the topic in terms of “waves” of “cycles” (Chamorro, Rubio, and Miranda, 2009; Elkington, 1997; Grant, 2000; Gupta and Ogden, 2009; Peattie, 2001; Peattie and Charter, 1992; Prothero, McDonagh, and Dobscha, 2010; Roberts and Bacon, 1997). The early 1970’s and 1990’s are typically acknowledged as the peaks or flows and the late 1970’s and early 1980’s as the valleys or ebbs of the waves of interest (Elkington, 1997; Peattie, 2001; Prothero, McDonagh, and Dobscha, 2010).

A second possibility for the misconception that green marketing is a novel concept may stem from the variety of phrases used to describe these marketing activities. A number of phrases have been used in discussing the interaction between marketing activities and the natural environment throughout the waves of interest in the subject (Peattie, 2001; Polonsky, 1994). Green, ecological, environmental, and sustainable are just a few of the phrases that have been used in discussing these activities. Some researchers have distinguished between the phrases (Van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996; Dobson, 1990; Kilbourne 1998; Peattie 2001) while others have regarded them as similar (Chamorro, Rubio and Miranda, 2007) and implied the differences in phraseology are “semantic” (Peattie and Crane, 2005). The different phraseology has even been said to reflect the waves of interest in the subject (Peattie, 2001). To the best of the author’s knowledge neither the existence of cycles or waves of green marketing nor the phrases that have been said to correspond to these waves has been empirically investigated. The goal of the present research is to fill that gap.

Methodology

A citation index is used to identify the most widely cited manuscripts related to the study of the marketing activities of for profit entities related to the natural environment and enacted with the intention of earning a profit (Henion, 1976). Manuscripts are first analyzed to identify the most frequently used phraseology related to these activities and are then classified based on publication date and orientation, micro versus macro, as defined by Hunt (1976). The goal of the classification and analysis is to answer two primary research questions: Does the most widely cited research reflect waves of interest in the marketing activities of for-profit entities related to the natural environment and enacted with the intention of earning a profit (Henion, 1976)? How do the phrases used by the authors of the most cited manuscripts mirror these waves if they do exist? After classifying 54 manuscripts published between 1914 and 2003 several insights are discussed.

Insights from the Analysis and Classification

When comparing the included manuscripts based on publication date and orientation there appears to be two distinct periods in which a large number of widely cited manuscripts were published, and a period in between characterized by the publication of only a small number of widely cited manuscripts. These periods correspond to the waves of interest identified by other researchers (Chamorro, Rubio, and Miranda, 2009; Elkington, 1997; Grant, 2000; Gupta and Ogden, 2009; Peattie, 2001; Peattie and

Charter 1992; Prothero, McDonagh, and Dobscha, 2010; Roberts and Bacon, 1997). Namely, as illustrated in Figure I the five manuscripts published in the 1970's with a citation index exceeding 100 were all published in the first half of the decade. This peak in the number of widely cited manuscripts is consistent with a peak in the number of publications related to green marketing research in general (Kilbourne and Beckmann, 1998) and the first wave of green marketing as discussed by other researchers (Peattie, 2001). The second half of the 1970's and the first half of the 1980's are typically viewed as the ebb between two waves of interest (Chamorro, Rubio, and Miranda, 2009; Kalafatis, Pollard, East, and Tsogas, 1999; Ottman, 1993; Polonsky and Mintu-Wimsatt, 1995). The paucity of widely cited manuscripts in the late 1970's and early 1980's is reflective of this trend. The 1990's are viewed as the golden years of green marketing with regard to the number green product introductions (Ottman, 1993 p.13), the amount of media attention (Kalafatis, Pollard, East, and Tsogas, 1999; Vandermerwe and Oliff, 1990), and the number of academic manuscripts (Kilbourne and Beckmann, 1998) and books (Chamorro, Rubio, and Miranda, 2009) published on the subject. As illustrated in Table I the 1990's is the decade with the largest number of publications and far exceeds the number of widely cited articles published in any previous decade. Finally, when looking at the number of manuscripts that have generated a citation index greater than 100 in the first decade of the 21st century we see that the number already exceeds that of either the 1970's or the 1980's.

Overall, it appears as though the most widely cited manuscripts related to the marketing activities of for-profit entities related to the natural environment and enacted with the intention of earning a profit would support the cyclical or wavelike nature of green marketing as discussed by other authors. In regards to the second research question, the phraseology used by the authors of the most widely cited manuscripts does not appear to clearly reflect an evolution of ideas. The focus of the manuscripts in terms of micro versus macro orientation appears to begin broad and then immediately narrow as reflected by the macro orientation of manuscripts published prior to 1970 and the micro orientation of manuscripts published from 1970-1990. The micro focus of early green marketing research in general has previously been acknowledged and Table I illustrates that the most widely cited manuscripts echo this trend. One explanation for this shift in focus may correspond to the formal inclusion of ecological issues into the discipline of marketing (see Kotler and Levy, 1969; Kotler, 1972).

Although the number of manuscripts with a micro orientation nearly doubles the number with a macro orientation the increase in macro publication may correspond to a broadened focus in the study of the interaction between marketing and the natural environment as acknowledged by proponents of waves of green marketing (Peattie, 2001). Although it is premature to make claims about the focus of the most cited manuscripts of the first decade on the 21st century it appears as though there is continued interest in both micro and macro issues.

Discussion

The purpose of this analysis was 1) to investigate whether the most widely cited manuscripts related to green marketing follow a cyclical pattern and 2) if the phrases used by the authors of these manuscripts reflect an evolution in the initiatives discussed. There is evidence to support the waves of green marketing as acknowledged by other researchers (Chamorro, Rubio, and Miranda, 2009; Elkington, 1997; Grant, 2000; Gupta and Ogden, 2009; Peattie, 2001; Peattie and Charter 1992; Prothero, McDonagh, and Dobscha, 2010; Roberts and Bacon, 1997). There is also evidence in support of an increasingly broader focus of green marketing manuscripts; however there does not appear to be a salient trend with regard to the phraseology used by authors within or across decades.

Limitations and Suggestion for Future Research

One of the inherent limitations to any narrative review is the subjectivity involved in selecting the works to include. The author attempted to avoid such a bias by employing an objective metric, however, subjectivity is invariably introduced in discriminating among manuscripts that address green marketing as defined herein or a tangential issue. The time the searches were conducted could also impact the results, as new manuscripts are constantly being published and therefore citation indexes are not static. Finally, the threshold number of citations was arbitrarily chosen based on space requirements. A number of manuscripts with varying orientations had upwards of 70 citations and should not be overlooked; however, the limited scope of this project resulted in a more stringent threshold.

Much of the dialogue on green marketing has been limited to post 1970 manuscripts; however, by looking outside of the traditional disciplinary boundaries the marketing activities of for profit entities

related to the natural environment enacted with the intention of earning a profit was recognized as an issue worthy of discourse as early as 1914. Future researchers should continue to examine the origins of green marketing as well as trends the overall trends in among early authors. A second avenue for further research involves content analyzing all manuscripts related to green marketing within a time frame to identify trends in phraseology used. By only reporting the most frequently used phrases in the most widely cited manuscripts the author may not have been able to identify trends if they exist.

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Table I: Classification Matrix

	Micro			Macro		
	Author (year)	Citation Index	Phraseology	Author (year)	Citation Index	Phraseology
Pre 1970				Gray (1914)	215	“Prevention of Exhaustion”
				Hotelling (1931)	2605	“Conservation” “Exploitation of Exhaustible Assets”
				Boulding (1966)	1217	“Econosphere” “Spaceman Economy”
				Hardin (1968)	322	“Population Problem” “Pollution Problem”
1970's	Kassarjian (1971)	131	“Ecology” “Concern for Air Pollution”			
	Anderson and Cunningham	224	“Socially Conscious Consumers”			
	Kinnear and Taylor (1973)	129	“Ecological Concern”			
	Kinnear et al. (1974)	229	“Ecologically Concerned Consumers”			
	Webster (1975)	272	“Socially Conscious Consumer”			
1980's	Balderjahn (1988)	201	“Ecologically Responsible Consumption”			
	Elkington and Hailes (1988)	120	“Green Consumers”			
1990's	Ellen, Wiener and Cobb-Walgreen (1991)	152	“Environmentally Conscious Behaviors”	Vandermerwe and Oliff (1990)	117	“Green Consumer Demand”
	Schwepker and Cornwell (1991)	168	“Ecologically Concerned Consumers” “Ecologically Packaged Goods”	Costanza (1991)	789	“Ecological Economics” “Sustainability”
	Baldassare and Katz (1992)	139	“Environmental Practices”	Carlson, Kangun and Grove (1993)	109	“Environmental Advertising Claims”
	Berger and Corbin (1992)	134	“Environmentally Responsible Behaviors” “Environmental Attitudes”	Goodland (1995)	308	“Environmental Sustainability”
	Sparks and Shepherd (1992)	280	“Green Consumerism”	Hunter and Green (1995)	229	“Environmental Quality”
	Coddington (1993)	167	“Environmental Marketing”	Peattie (1995)	224	“Environmental Marketing”
	Davis (1993)	108	“Environmental Advertising”	Porter and Van der Linde (1995)	2079	“Green” “Environmental Regulation”
	Ottman (1993)	149	“Green Marketing”	Goodland and Daly (1996)	175	“Environmental Sustainability”
	Drumwright (1994)	344	“Socially responsible buying” “Environmental Concern”	Elkington (1997)	281	“Sustainability” “Environmental Sustainability”
	Ottman (1994) (1998)	276	“Green Marketing”	Hunter (1997)	297	“Sustainability” “Environmental Sustainability”
	Grunert and Juhl (1995)	241	“Environmental Attitudes”	Kilbourne, McDonagh and Prothero (1997)	104	“Sustainable Consumption”
	Polonsky (1995)	123	“Environmental Marketing Strategy”	Menon and Menon (1997)	308	“Environmental Concern” “Environpreneurial Marketing Strategy”

	Shrum, McCarty and Lowrey (1995)	139	“Green Consumer”	Middleton and Hawkins (1998)	238	“Sustainability” “Global Environmental Issues”
	Shrivastava (1995)	526	“Ecological Sustainability”			
	Hart and Ahuja (1996)	445	“Green”			
	Roberts (1996)	239	“Green Consumers”			
	Schlegelmilch et al. (1996)	163	“Environmental Consciousness” “Green Purchasing Decisions”			
	Mainieri et al (1997)	150	“Green Buying” “Environmental Concern”			
	Osterhus (1997)	186	“Pro-social Consumer Influence Strategies” “Environmental Positioning”			
	Roberts and Bacon (1997)	115	“Environmental Concern” “Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior”			
	Wandel and Bugge (1997)	160	“Environmental Concern”			
	Kalafatis et al. (1999)	134	“Green Marketing”			
	Straughten and Roberts (1999)	181	“Environmental Segmentation” “Green Consumer Behavior”			
21 st Century	Miles and Covin (2000)	203	“Environmental Marketing”	Ekins (2000)	157	“Environmental Sustainability”
	Laroche et al (2001)	212	“Environmentally Friendly Products” “Green Products” “Environmental Concern”	Banerjee et al (2003)	123	“Environmentalism”
	Roe et al (2001)	110	“Green Marketing” “Green Electricity”	Spaargaren (2003)	153	“Sustainable Consumption”
	Harper and Makatouni (2002)	114	“Green Consumer” “Environmental Concern”			
	Makatouni (2002)	111	“Environmental Values”			
	Diamantopoulos et al (2003)	140	“Environmental Consciousness” “Ecological Consumer Behavior”			