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Identifying Green Marketing Strategies and Studying Organic Producer's Awareness toward Green Marketing Mix Strategies in Iran

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Abstract

The main purpose of this descriptive-survey research is to identify green marketing strategies in Iran and also to investigate the level of awareness of organic agricultural producers in Iran about mixed marketing strategies. The statistical population of this study is all producers of organic products in Iran (N=83) that all these units were considered as a research sample. Research tools include a questionnaire in three sections of general characteristics questions (7 questions), green marketing strategies (9 items) in three dimensions (organizational, environmental, and consumer) and a survey of producers' awareness of the green marketing mix (16 items) in four dimensions (green product, green price, green place, and green promotion) was developed for organic agricultural producers. The validity of the questionnaire was proofed by face and content validity. Likewise, the reliability of the questionnaire was tested employing Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was accomplished using SPSS25 software at two levels of descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and correlation coefficients were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that the strategy of organic producers in Iran is more focused on its environmental aspect. The results also revealed that the majority of producers are highly aware of the green marketing mix. There is no positive and significant relationship between manufacturers' awareness of the green marketing mix and research variables. There was no significant difference between contextual variables and producers' awareness of the green marketing mix.

Keywords: Marketing Strategies, Green Marketing, Marketing Mix, Agricultural Organic Products, Awareness, Iran

Introduction

There are very limited resources on the planet, but these resources are not enough to meet the needs of the world's growing population. Therefore, the correct use of these limited resources must be considered (Diglel and Yazdanifard, 2014). In the new century, the main challenge for human beings is to find a fair and sustainable way of production, consumption, and life (Peattie and Charter, 1994). This has been a very important and vital issue for many years organic and thought-provoking discussions

about environmental and nature conservation, minimizing pollution the result of human and commercial activities has been observed in the global arena from the perspective of consumers and companies (Solvalier, 2010). Environmental pollution caused by human activities, these are issues that have often been identified by active organizations as a serious threat to humanity (Ranaei Kordshooli and Allahyari Bouzanjani, 2012). Environmental concerns are not only an important public issue, Rather, but it has also become a very important topic in academic research over the past decades (Rostamzadeh and Alimohammadi Siyaban, 2016). Due to the concerns, the market for environmentally friendly products is growing globally. These concerns about environmental sustainability have led consumers to pay more attention to this issue and gradually affect their behavior (Papadopoulos et al., 2010). Consumers not only prefer to buy organic products than products with common cultivation Rather, be willing to pay more for genuine environmental protection for products that meet environmental standards (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). Today, the environment has increasingly become a vital and very important issue for all segments of the population, both as customers and as producers. Meanwhile, consumer concerns about environmental accountability are aligned with environmental laws and have pressured a significant number of companies to design and create environmentally friendly programs (Min and Galle, 2001). Therefore, companies must significantly reduce their negative environmental impacts on production, distribution, supply of raw materials, and energy consumption. If these needs are not met, customers will be pushed back by laws and stubborn demands (Grant, 2008). As a result, in recent years, some industries have taken steps to reduce the final effects they can have on the environment by taking action. On the other hand, marketing, attracting more customers and as a result, more sales have become the most important task of all kinds of jobs (Burnett, 2008). According to Govender, the main goal of marketing is to have the greatest impact on consumers' purchasing decisions when buying products. The marketing process is not limited to promoting product sales and enhancing services, but also includes training, effective communication, and the power to influence and socialize with people. (Govender et al., 2016). Therefore, this issue has entered into all dimensions of organizations and has also affected marketing and has led to the emergence of the concept of green marketing. In general, green marketing is a much broader concept that can be applied to consumer goods, industry, or services (Rahimnia et al., 2016) And includes all marketing activities developed to promote and maintain environmentally friendly behavior and attitudes (Peera Kumar and Venkatasubbaiah, 2017). Green or eco-friendly marketing means that companies, for the purpose of sustainable development, use the role of environmental-social responsibility to develop their environmental and natural marketing activities (Cao, 2001). Green (sustainable) marketing is a method of marketing that addresses the needs of the customer, the organization, and the community simultaneously and for a long time (Peera Kumar and Venkatasubbaiah, 2017). Green marketing represents a growing market for products and services with social responsibility for the sustainability of limited resources and the environment (Sharma and Pai, 2015). This means designing and marketing products that can be used by all consumers around the world for a long time, without harming consumers or the environment (Peera Kumar and Venkatasubbaiah, 2017). The concept of green marketing is a realistic concept, which requires activities that help implement and adopt such policies, as well as programs and activities that are useful in securing the environment (Kim and Chung, 2014).

Green marketing is defined as the process of planning, implementing and monitoring price changes, product promotion and distribution,

which simultaneously includes the criteria of satisfying customer needs, achieving a company's goals and adapting the whole process to the ecosystem (Misankova and Chlebikova, 2013). Farage et al. stated that a green marketing strategy helps companies manage their resources in the best possible way. As a result, it improves the situation of large companies and ultimately improves their profitability (Fraj et al., 2013). Nadanieva et al. Stated that applying green marketing principles to business systems means that there is enormous potential for companies to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Nadanyiova et al., 2015).

Hamdi concluded that the youth population of Tehran has significant knowledge about green products And among the factors of social impact, environmental attitude, environmental concern, understanding the importance of environmental problems, people's perception of social responsibility, understanding the effectiveness of environmental behavior and people's concern about personal perception that affects the desire to buy green in young people The four factors of social impact, environmental concern, people's perception of social responsibility and people's concern about personal perception had the greatest impact on youth shopping (Hamdi et al., 2011). The results of Abolgasemi and Barghi Moghaddam (2016) showed that according to customers, the priority of green marketing components are green product characteristics, green price, green certification, environmental knowledge and awareness, and green promotion, respectively. Han et al. (2019) concluded that firms that adhere to environmental ethics are more likely to implement green marketing programs that include (green production, pricing, distribution) Which ultimately promotes and then improves the performance of companies. Sabouri (2011), concluded that Iran has many strengths and potentials in the field of environment and its protection and people eager to carry out green and environmental marketing programs and at the right time It has entered this category together with other countries of the world and these projects have started in it. The only noteworthy point is that more and better attention should be paid to the problems and challenges ahead, and by solving them, we should accelerate these matters. Divyapriyadharshini concluded that most respondents are aware of green products This study also showed that awareness of green products as an important factor influences consumers' decision to buy green (Divyapriyadharshini et al., 2019). Sujit (2015) concluded that people are aware of environmentally friendly products and have a positive attitude towards green marketing and green products, but there is still a need to increase awareness. Gupta concluded that respondents develop their awareness of the concept of green marketing and green companies. Respondents are also well aware of the fact that corporate productivity can be greatly improved through improved processes. Respondents are aware of the green environment because it is less harmful to the environment, and companies can seek to implement this concept to make things better. They also concluded that government pressure plays an important role in green marketing. They also believe that running a green marketing company is difficult. Respondents strongly stated that they are familiar with the green brand and would like to know more about green brands. Most respondents understand the importance of the green brand, which means that there are positive signs for improving the environment as well as the business (Gupta et al., 2014).

Green marketing is a phenomenon that has gained special importance in the modern market and has been introduced as an important concept in most parts of the world (Peera Kumar and Venkatasubbaiah, 2017). Green marketing is a very attractive process that has been started by developing countries today (Rostamzadeh and Alimohammadi Siyaban, 2016). Although the emergence of green marketing has been evident in recent

years, it seems that in some parts of the world, green marketing is much slower than in other parts of the world (Poco, 1997). The food industry plays as a mirror of the economic and industrial development of a country and its extensive operations from production to distribution and finally, consumption has a very important and key role in the dynamics of the economic wheel of each country (Rostamzadeh and Alimohammadi Siyaban, 2016). As Iran is a country in the process of development, given the country's development prospects, it seems sustainable and responsible development that takes into account the environmental impact and protection of the environment. It is very important for the future of the country. By studying the strategies among producers and distributors of organic products in Iran, the dominant strategies in the country can be achieved. Access to this information can help improve profitability among manufacturers and distributors by improving their decisions. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the fundamental question of which dimension of green marketing strategies in Iran is more focused, and to what extent are producers aware of green marketing strategies? Therefore, the first goal is to rank green marketing strategies among producers in Iran and examine the factors affecting it. The second purpose is to examine the level of awareness of organic producers in Iran about the mixed marketing strategy (4P) and the factors affecting it.

Research Methods

The predominant paradigm of this research is quantitative, and a survey method was used to collect the required data. The statistical population of this study was all producers of organic agricultural products in Iran (N=83). Counting method was used to access the sample size (n=83). Research tool includes a questionnaire in three sections of general characteristics questions (7 Question), green marketing strategies (9 items) in three dimensions (organizational, environmental, and consumer), and a survey of manufacturers' awareness of the green marketing mix (16 items) it was developed in four dimensions (green product, green price, green distribution, and green advertising) for producers of organic agricultural products. To design the specific question of the questionnaire, a range of five Likert scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree) was used for the marketing mix and a range of five Likert scale (very low – very high) for green marketing strategies were used. The initial questionnaire was given to several university professors and experts to comment on the validity of the questionnaire. Therefore, the validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by face and content validity. In order to assess the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used (organization 0.755, environmental 0.741, consumers 0.837, green product 0.719, green advertising 0.742, green price 0.731, and green distribution 0.736) which the result confirmed the reliability of the research tool. In this research, descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation have been used to analyze the data obtained from the samples. The inferential statistics of mean comparison (t-test and F-test) as well as Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficient test were used to analyze the data. These analyzes were performed using $SPSS_{25}$ statistical software.

Finding

According to the results of the survey, most of the respondents had an experience of activity fewer than 10 years (42.2 percent), and 10 to 20 years (42.2 percent) in agricultural activities. their average experience was 13 years, and the minimum and maximum of their activity in agriculture was 2 and 26 years, respectively. Most of them had 5 to 10 years of experience in the production of organic products (45.8 percent), the average, minimum and maximum experience in the production of organic products were 7,1 and 15 years, respectively. Most of the respondents had a bachelor's degree (37.3 percent) and also the respondents with 89.2 percentage of

frequency were distributors of their company's products.

Green marketing strategies in Iran were examined in three organizational, environmental, and consumers dimensions. In relation to the organizational strategy component; item of producing products with better quality (M = 4.44) and increasing the economic efficiency of the company (M = 4.16) were of great importance for producers and suppliers of organic products. In relation to the environmental strategy component; production item in order to protect the environment (M = 4.79) was of great importance for producers and suppliers of organic products. And finally, in relation to the component health strategies; the item of increasing consumer health and safety (M = 4.13) was of great importance for producers and suppliers of organic products (Table 1).

Table 1 Frequency distribution of green marketing strategies indicators

Indicators of green marketing strategies		Average	Standard deviation	Rank
Organizational				
Org1	Produce better quality products	4.44	0.568	1
Org2	Increase the economic return of the company	4.16	0.729	2
Org3	Gain a competitive advantage in product production	3.51	1.086	3
Org4	Gain a higher share of the market	3.43	0.965	4
Environmental				
Env1	Production to protect the environment	4.79	0.406	1
Env2	Reduce environmental pollution	4.74	0.464	2
Env3	Reduce energy consumption	2.91	0.872	3
Consumers				
Con1	Increase consumer health and safety	4.13	0.761	1
Con2	A better life for consumers	4.10	0.781	2

In order to rank the components o green marketing strategies; cumulative indices of each component were considered as the score of each component. Environmental components (with an average of 4.15); consumer (with an average of 4.12) and organizational (with an average of 3.89) were ranked in the first to third most important strategies for the production of organic products among Iranian producers and distributors (Table 2).

Table 2 Dimensions of green marketing strategies ranking

Component	Average	Standard deviation	Min	Max	Rank
Environmental	4.15	0.423	3	5	1
Consumer	4.12	0.726	2.5	5	2
Organizational	3.89	0.603	2.57	5	3

Manufacturer and suppliers' awareness of the green marketing mix was examined in four dimensions: green product, green advertising, green pricing and green

distribution. In relation to the green product, manufacturers and suppliers of organic products had the highest awareness about products containing environmentally friendly elements (M = 4.41), products with an environment-friendly production process (M = 4.34), and products with fewer emissions (M = 4.02). In relation to the green advertising component; Producers and suppliers of organic products had a high level of awareness about advertising items expressing the company's environmental responsibility (M = 3.72) and advertisement to promote a green lifestyle (M = 3.67). Manufacturers and suppliers of organic products in relation to the green price component had a high level of awareness about the item of good value for money (M = 4.34). In relation to the green distribution component, manufacturers and suppliers of organic products had high awareness in relation to the distribution items by new transport fleet (M = 4.03), distribution using rail and maritime transport for bulk shipments (M = 3.49).

Table 3 Frequency distribution of indicators of green marketing mix awareness

Indicators of green marketing strategies		Average	Standard deviation	Rank
Green Production				
Gpro1	Contain elements that are not harmful to the environment	4.71	0.530	1
Gpro4	The production process should be environmentally friendly	4.34	0.756	2
Gpro5	Create less environmental pollution	4.02	0.780	3
Gpro3	Made of materials that provide recyclability for the product	3.20	1.176	4
Gpro2	Be efficient in terms of energy consumption	3.18	1.149	5
Green Promotion				
Gpro2	Express the company's environmental responsibility	3.72	0.801	1
Gpro1	Promotes a green lifestyle	3.67	0.797	2
Gpro3	Describe the environmental characteristics of products	3.12	1.075	3
Gpro4	Increases consumer awareness of environmental issues	3.10	0.987	4
Green Price				
Gpri2	Offering good value for money	4.34	0.756	1
Gpri1	The price is fair and reasonable	3.15	1.076	2
Green Place				
Gpla2	Use of the transport fleet that is new & environmentally friendly	4.03	0.723	1
Gpla4	Use of railways & sea transport is for bulk	3.49	0.915	2
Gpla5	Encouraging people to drive cost-effectively to reduce fuel consumption	2.74	0.921	3
Gpla3	Use green fuels such as fuels with low sulfur content and Use alternative fuels such as liquefied natural gas	2.48	1.223	4

Gpla1	Efficient use of available space	2.16	1.102	5

In order to rank the components of the green marketing mix; Cumulative indices of each component were considered as the score of each component. Green product (with an average of 3.89), green price (with an average of 3.75), green promotion (with an average of 3.40), and green place (with an Average o 2.98) were ranked first to fourth, respectively (Table 4).

Table 4 ranked the dimensions of awareness of green marketing mix

Component	Average	Standard deviation	Min	Max	Rank
Green product	3.89	0.534	2.60	5	1
Green price	3.75	0.742	2.50	5	2
Green promotion	3.40	0.641	2	5	3
Green place	2.98	0.549	1.8	4	4
Total awareness	3.470	0.385	2.63	4.13	-

In order to classify the awareness of producers and suppliers of organic products, the formula of confidence interval (Shaban Ali Fami, 2000) using the mean and standard deviation was used, according to which the first category has a score less than 3.27, the second category has a score between 3.27 and 3.66, and the third group with a score higher than 3.66 were calculated. 32.5 percent of manufacturers and suppliers in the first category (low awareness); 27.7 percent were in the second category (moderate awareness) and 39.8 percent were in the third category (high awareness) (Table 5).

Table 5 Frequency distribution of respondents based on different levels of awareness

Levels of awareness of green marketing mix strategies	Abundance	Percentage
Low level awareness (less than 3.27)	27	32.5
Intermediate awareness (between 3.27 and 3.66)	23	27.5
High level of awareness (above 3.66)	33	39.8
Total	83	100

To examine the relationship between some research variables and the awareness of manufacturers and distributors of green marketing mix, Sperman and Pearson coefficients were used based on the characteristics of the variable. The result shows that there is no positive and significant relationship between manufacturers' awareness of green marketing mix with research variables (experience, organic production experience, education, and field of activity) (Table 6).

Table 6 Relationship between manufacturers' awareness o green marketing mix and research variables

Variable	Correlation coefficient	R value	Significance level
Agricultural experience	Pearson	-0.008	0.942
Organic production experience	Pearson	0.001	0.993
Education	Spearman	0.038	0.773
Activity	Spearman	-0.161	0.145

To investigate the effect of contextual variables on producers' awareness of green marketing mix, mean comparison test was used . The results showed that there was no significant difference between contextual variables (experience, organic production experience, education and field of activity) and producers' awareness of green marketing mix (Table 7).

Table 7 The effect of some research variables on manufacturers' awareness

Variable	F	Significance level
Agricultural Experience	0.067	0.935
Organic Production Experience	0.123	0.885
Education	1.217	0.309
Domain of Activity	2.473	0.120

Discussion

The results showed that the strategy of organic producers in Iran is initially focused on the environmental aspect, which means producers are more focused on producing products to protect the environment and reduce environmental pollution but in the meantime, their focus is on using less energy. Producers then focus on the consumer aspect and increasing the health and safety of consumers and improving the lives of consumers is one of their priorities. Finally, the organizational dimension of strategies by improving the quality of products, increasing the economic efficiency of the production unit is considered. Since most production units have little experience in the production of organic products, they pay more attention to improving the quality of their product in order to stimulate customer demand. They have a long-term goal of gaining a competitive advantage in product production and gaining a higher market share. These findings are in contrast to the finding of Papadopoulos et al. (2010), who prioritized the strategies of the companies surveyed in their research into developing the company, creating differentiation, advertising, and increasing sales.

The result of the survey of producers' awareness of green marketing mix showed that the majority of organic producers in Iran have a high awareness of green marketing mix (according to the findings of Hamdi et al., 2011). And this knowledge in the field of green products, respectively (in line with the

findings of Abolgasemi and Barghi Moghaddam, 2016); Green price; Green advertising, and Green distribution were observed. Manufacturers consider green products to be products that contain elements that are not harmful to the environment, their production process is environmentally friendly and causes less pollution in the environment. Manufacturers' awareness of energy efficiency was at an all-time low. Since they are less aware of energy efficiency, it can be concluded why they have paid less attention to using less energy in their strategies. Manufacturers consider the green price to be commensurate with the value of the product offered. This means that they believe that better quality goods have a higher value and that the price should be commensurate with the value of the goods they produce. Manufacturers consider green advertising to be an advertisement that expresses the company's responsibility for the product, promotes a lifestyle, expresses the environmental characteristics of the product to the consumer and ultimately increases consumer awareness. To organic products producers' awareness of green distribution is mostly related to the transport fleet used in the distribution phase, which is environmentally effective. There is no significant relationship between producers' awareness of the green marketing mix and research variables (agricultural experience, organic experience, education, and field of activity). There was no significant difference between contextual variables (agricultural experience, organic experience, education and field of activity) and producers' awareness of green marketing mix.

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